

February 28, 2025

**Written Testimony in Opposition (UNFAV) of House Bill 1456
Hospitals and Tissue Banks – Autologous and Directed Blood Donations –
Requirements
Health and Government Operations Committee**

Dear Chairwoman Pena-Melynk and members of the committee,

UMMC is a tertiary care center offering complex clinical services. supporting a level 1 trauma center, adult and pediatric hematopoietic cell and solid organ transplants, as well as adult and pediatric cardiovascular medical and surgical services. UMMC Transfusion Service and Blood Bank's primary mission is to ensure the availability and the safety of blood products for transfusion to patients.

UMMC has serious concerns with this bill as proposed. This bill is unnecessary **since medically indicated autologous and directed donations are already supported by UMMC and affiliated blood suppliers.** This bill will create requirements related to autologous or directed blood donations that are unnecessary and have the potential to interfere with high quality medical care. **Directed donations are not inherently safer.** For example, the risk of transfusion-transmitted infections is higher in directed units when donors under pressure are personally selected by the patient, which this bill is entitling patients to do for non-medical reasons. In contrast, altruistic volunteer blood donors are under no pressure to donate. If passed, this bill may be misused by patients concerned with blood transfusion from a donor vaccinated against COVID-19. However, there is no scientific evidence that support the practice of directed donation for this reason.

Moreover, blood transfusions from closely related family member donors tend to cause unnecessary delays and interfere with treatment, including patients' transplant eligibility, and raise the risk of transfusion-associated graft versus host disease, which is associated with increased mortality.

Multiple safeguards, including extensive donor screening protocols and infectious disease testing, ensure the safety and availability of the blood supply for all patients. The foundation of the nation's blood supply is volunteer community blood donation; more than 10.7M red blood cells are transfused annually in the United States, and less than 0.1% are medically necessary autologous or directed donations. UMMC already supports **medically indicated** autologous and directed donations. This **bill is overly burdensome** and has the potential to result in an increased number of medically unwarranted autologous and directed blood donations that require additional special handling outside the well-established processes, that currently protect the safety and availability of blood for all patients.

It is for these reasons that I urge you to vote unfavorably on this bill.

Sincerely,



Magali Fontaine MD PhD
Professor
Department of Pathology
University of Maryland School of Medicine
Director of Transfusion Services
22 S Greene Street N2W50a
Baltimore MD 21201
Tel 410 328 3834
email: mfontaine@som.umaryland.edu

References:

1. <https://www.fda.gov/vaccines-blood-biologics/safety-availability-biologics/important-information-about-directed-blood-donations-are-not-medically-indicated>. FDA. October 2023.
2. Position Statement: Policy Proposals Containing Requirements for Directed or Autologous Blood Donations. The Association for the Advancement of Blood and Biotherapies. April 2024.
3. Joint Statement: Blood Community Reiterates the Safety of America's Blood Supply for Patients. AABB, America's Blood Center, American Red Cross. January 2023.