

Testimony for Maryland HB1481 / 2026

Madame Chair and Committee members, My name is Liz James. I am the Founder of the nationwide nonprofit Blessed By His Blood. I speak on behalf of HB 1481, and represent Blessed By His Blood Cooperative members.

1481 simply protects a patient's right to personal autonomy during a time of health crisis. Currently, many patients are being discouraged or denied direct donor blood, and in doing so, they are being denied their basic human right to choose based upon their religious, moral or personal convictions as upheld by:

- **The 14th Amendment of the Constitution (Section 1):**
- **The Patient Self-Determination Act of 1990**

This is especially critical in populations such as sickle cell patients, who receive regular blood transfusions and who statistically are at a lower risk of a transfusion reaction from a small pool of direct donors than receiving from the general blood supply.

Today, you will be hearing testimony from professionals in the blood industry who oppose HB 1481. I'd like to address those most common objections directly:

Regarding Safety Concerns:

- Directed donor blood has been used safely for decades, and even recommended by *blood banks* as an added measure of security and safety in the 1990's. Directed donor blood is tested for exactly the same infectious diseases as anonymous donor blood. It is AS SAFE as anonymous donor blood, if not safer.
- Directed donors include friends and acquaintances, all of whom would no more raise an immunologic risk than an anonymous donor. We agree that family donations could raise immunologic risks, but the reality is that direct donors come from a variety of sources which are not blood relatives.

Regarding Logistical Concerns:

- Bags of blood and blood product are bar coded, making each bag easily trackable. Any concerns related to storage and transport are due to corporate policy not Federal regulation.
- You will also likely hear that direct donor blood makes blood shortages worse, and we fail to see this logic. A new donor ADDS to the supply and their donation frees up anonymous donor blood for another need.
- Another argument is that direct donor blood may be wasted if the units go unused. This too would be due to corporate policy, not Federal regulation. Many blood banks do not "waste" unused units of blood. They return unused bags to the general blood pool.

In conclusion, at least 18 states are currently working on legislation to protect a patient's right to direct donor blood. This is not a concern that is going to go away. Please protect your

constituents' right to personal autonomy and support HB 1481. Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions.