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Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee
Proponent Testimony
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Testimony in Support of Ohio Bill No. 252 to Designate January as “Blood Donor Awareness Month”

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Beagle, Ranking Member Tavares and members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid committee:

My name is Andrew Keelor and I am the Director of Donor Relations at Community Blood Center, an independent regional blood center based in Dayton, Ohio. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill No. 252, designating January as Blood Donor Awareness Month in Ohio.

Community Blood Center depends on volunteer donors to help maintain an ample, safe and life-sustaining blood supply for the region. We collect and prepare donated blood and blood components to fill the needs of our 25 partner hospitals and health centers in 15 counties across southwest Ohio and eastern Indiana.

Some 42,000 patients a year in our area will need donated blood. To complete this mission CBC must register approximately 250 donors per day at our Donor Centers and in the community with an average of six mobile blood drives per day.

There is no medical substitute for human blood when a patient is in need. Although there are thousands of life-saving volunteer donors who generously give each year, the steady population and advances in medical care means the need for blood to treat patients in the Miami Valley and across Ohio is ever-present.

This ongoing need and the very perishable nature of blood demands a continuous, deliberate and dedicated effort to recruit new volunteer blood donors. Reminding the public of this awesome responsibility and vital need would be the greatest benefit of Ohio Blood Donor Awareness Month.

Nearly one fourth of all registrations to donate whole blood at CBC come from our high school students. Last year 118 high schools in our region hosted 226 blood drives with 14,655 registrations to donate, 6,252 first-time donors and 11,461 blood donations.

Miami University is CBC's oldest college blood drive and our biggest blood drive partner. Miami hosted 17 blood drives in 2016 totaling 1,704 donors, 566 first-time donors and 1,357 donations.

These young people represent the next generation of donors. About 53 percent of the CBC donor base is over the age of 50. "Baby Boomers" have proven to be an extremely loyal group of donors, but many are reaching an age when they are able to donate less frequently, or may not be able to donate at all. In addition, many are facing health concerns that require them to become blood recipients.

We ask high schools and colleges to allow us to come onto their campuses and interrupt their day to hold blood drives. We ask parents to allow their children to donate, and perhaps give special permission for their 16-year-old children to donate.

They do this because they know giving blood will teach community service. They also know that it could be their child injured in an accident, or diagnosed with leukemia and in need of blood.

We ask churches and houses of worship to open their doors for community blood drives. They do this knowing that self-sacrifice to aid a stranger is the closest we may come to Godliness on this earth.

We ask businesses and industries to allow us to come into their factories and interrupt the work flow so employees can donate while at work and on the clock. They risk losing productivity, but they accept this disruption because they believe supporting blood drives makes them a good neighbor and true friend of the community.

We ask hospitals, police and fire departments, civic clubs, retirement villages and community clubs to sponsor blood drives. They do so willingly and enthusiastically. They turn these events into gatherings where neighbors greet neighbors in a joint celebration of their community.

Blood drives often strengthen community bonds by inspiring friendly competition. Police and fire departments will take on the challenge of "Battle of the Badges" blood drives. Some rival high schools in our area are now combining their blood drives with a charity benefit called "Unity in the Community."

In Miami County, the 20th annual Troy-Piqua Challenge Blood Drive will take place this fall. Troy and Piqua have one of the oldest rivalries in Ohio football. The same enthusiasm for the football rivalry goes into seeing which town will claim bragging rights for donating the most blood at the high school and community blood drives that take place during the week of the Troy-Piqua football game.

Many supporters see blood drives as an appropriate way to honor the sanctity of life. A blood drive to "replenish" the blood supply is a way to show support for a neighbor in need. Neighbors supported multiple "Iron Man" blood drives for Scott Boyd in his hometown of West Liberty. Scott was severely injured in a farm accident last year and survived against all odds after receiving 108 units of blood.

Blood drives are a way of celebrating a life well lived. Last year marked the 20th anniversary of the Officer John P. Kalamian Blood Drive in honor of the young Centerville police officer who lost his life in the line of duty.

As you can see, we are a people bound together by the life-saving acts of giving and receiving blood. The need for blood is a challenge. The giving of blood is a sacrifice. Providing blood does not guarantee that every life will be saved. But the will to give, and the availability of donated blood, gives hope.

We cannot ask more of our citizens. We support the recognition of donors and the increased awareness of this mission that would be elevated by Blood Donor Awareness Month in the great state of Ohio.

Thank you.