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My name is Kay Ollech, and I am the Collection Services Director at Community Blood Center in Dayton, Ohio. We are an independent community blood center, providing blood products for transfusion to 25 hospitals in 15 counties in Ohio and eastern Indiana. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill No. 252, designating January as Blood Donor Awareness Month in Ohio.

Over the 34 years I have been with CBC, I have experienced massive change in the blood banking industry. There have been major advances in the practice of transfusion medicine, transfusion safety, and the need for an expanded choice of blood products to meet the demands of current medical practice. I am proud of CBC's commitment to donor and recipient safety, and our record of having an adequate blood supply for the patients in our service area. But the awe I feel at the commitment of our blood donors has only grown over the years I've been at CBC.

When I first started my nursing career, I worked in Oncology, and transfused more than my fair share of blood components to support patients through their cancer treatment. The resilience of the human spirit was on display every shift, as these patients worked so hard to "beat the odds". Although I had stood anxiously by the phone, waiting for platelets to arrive from the blood center, I never really understood what was behind those life-sustaining products until I came to work at CBC. Those products I waited so anxiously for came from real people who were willing to help a stranger. We call them blood donors. These incredible human beings give freely of their time and cells, so that people they will never know have a chance to live. There can't be any group more deserving of recognition than blood donors.

The commitment of our donors to assuring a safe and adequate blood supply never fails to amaze me. These people, like Judy, take time out of overly busy schedules to spend an hour or two donating blood, platelets, and /or plasma, so that someone they will never know has a chance to survive an illness or an accident. Our donors (including Judy) have come in on Christmas for a special blood product, so that a young teenager can survive through the holidays, and his family won't always remember Christmas as the day their son died from leukemia. Our donors don't know it, but they donate so that a mother who has complications from a delivery will be able to survive to raise her newborn child, or so a premature infant can be put on a machine that oxygenates the baby's blood, so those immature lungs can develop further. Blood donors who just stopped in on their way home or supported the blood drive at their church didn't know it, but they gave Pam the chance to recover from severe injuries she received in a car accident, so that she could return home and enjoy life with her family. Pam knows the importance of blood transfusion, and she also appreciates the commitment of our donors, since she has been a blood donor, too.

Our donors don't donate for praise and recognition, but for the quiet satisfaction of knowing they saved a life or two with their gift. Our donors make a regular commitment to donating, knowing that without the blood on the shelf at the time it is needed, someone may die. None of us can predict when tragedy will strike, or where. We just assume blood will be there when we need it. When a horrendous event like the Pulse nightclub shooting occurs, it's the blood on the shelf, from our "everyday" donors that provides the victims the chance to survive and recover.

These amazing people we call blood donors put up with all the regulatory requirements we inflict on them, because they understand that we, CBC, are responsible for assuring that the blood we send to the hospital is as safe as it can be for the patients who will receive it. Our donors listen patiently while we ask the same questions over and over, run through the steps in our process each time, and tolerate the changes to eligibility criteria and travel restrictions with all the patience they can muster, because they understand and appreciate the need for blood safety. We are as committed to the safety of our blood donors, as much as we are the safety of the patients who will receive the blood we collect. Sometimes donors aren't as concerned about their own well-being as much as we are, but we are. Ultimately, CBC has the same commitment to protecting the health of our donors as the recipients that receive the blood. We take both of these commitments seriously, while trying to make the donation process as enjoyable as we can. After all, we rely on our donors to want to come back.

We at CBC, and all other blood centers, are so dependent on these "quiet heroes" we call donors. We never fail to be amazed by their humility, their altruism, and their concern for their fellow man. We make sure to thank every donor multiple times, but donors like Judy don't donate for the cookies and thank yous. Judy, and others like her, donate because they know the need exists, is ongoing, and by the time it's needed, it has to be on the shelf ready to go for patients like Pam.

In summary, we at CBC owe a debt of gratitude to our donors we can't begin to pay down. We are proud to be the providers of blood products to the patients in our service area, and proud of the donors that allow us to make that happen. It has been an honor for me to be involved with the blood donation process for 34+ years. I'm so happy to have the opportunity to get to know people like Judy, and know that we have helped many people like Pam each and every day, and we will continue to do so to the best of our ability. By enacting House Bill 252 to increase awareness of the constant need for blood donors, this committee recognizes the contribution blood donors make every day across Ohio, and increase awareness of the need for blood donors into the future.

Thank you for your time, and for allowing us a chance to speak on behalf of CBC.