



December 7, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Ryan, and Minority Leaders Schumer and Pelosi:

AABB (formerly known as the American Association of Blood Banks), America's Blood Centers and the American Red Cross encourage you to pass the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness & Advancing Innovation Act (PAHPAI, S. 2852 and H.R. 6378) before Congress adjourns for 2018. Collectively, our organizations represent the nation's blood collection establishments, transfusion services, and transfusion medicine professionals.

We commend the House Energy and Commerce Committee and the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee for their commitment to improving the nation's preparedness and response capabilities through the reauthorization of the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act (PAHPA). Our nation's blood supply is a critical aspect of emergency preparedness and response systems. Unlike other pharmaceuticals and biologics, blood cannot be manufactured to meet demand. Instead our healthcare system relies on the continuous availability of non-remunerated donors to meet the ever-present needs of acute care patients as well as those with ongoing chronic conditions. Independent, non-profit blood centers support this need by maintaining inventories sufficient to meet both day-to-day needs and acute surges, as well as preparedness for more extended emergency surge responses. The finite shelf-life of blood components, coupled with the 24-48 hours required for testing post-donation, demands that blood already be available when emergencies occur.

The bills include important provisions that are intended to strengthen the U.S. blood system. Section 209 in the House bill is a significant step in examining the unique, and often overlooked, role of the nation's blood supply in emergency preparedness and response systems and the specific challenges associated with donor recruitment, ensuring the adequacy of the blood supply in the face of public health emergencies, implementing the transfusion transmission monitoring system, and other measures to promote safety and innovation. We believe that policies that support the availability of a safe and adequate blood supply are needed. The report required by this section is important to evaluating possible solutions.

In addition, we support the references to blood centers and the blood system included in the section requiring the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) to develop and update guidelines for regional health care emergency and response systems. We support the provision that requires the ASPR to consult with blood banks and other key stakeholders when developing and updating guidelines. Including blood centers in this process is paramount and consistent with the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) recognition of blood as one of the core functional areas in Emergency Support Function #8 of the National Response Framework. We also support the provision in the House bill that specifically recognizes potential financial implications for blood centers to implement and follow the guidelines. Given that blood is an essential part of the nation's trauma system, emergency preparedness and response system and healthcare system generally, it is essential that financial barriers not impede the availability of safe blood ahead of and during response activities.

AABB, America's Blood Centers and the American Red Cross are committed to the nation's health security and encourage Congress to pass these provisions in PAHPAI before adjourning for 2018. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact AABB (Leah Stone, lmstone@aabb.org, 301-215-6554), America's Blood Centers (Kate Fry, kfry@americasblood.org, 202-654-2911) and American Red Cross (Julie Manes, julie.manes@redcross.org, 202-417-5147).

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cc: Chairman Lamar Alexander, HELP Committee
Chairman Greg Walden, Energy & Commerce Committee
Ranking Member Patty Murray, HELP Committee
Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Energy & Commerce Committee
Senator Richard Burr
Senator Bob Casey
Representative Susan W. Brooks
Representative Anna Eshoo