

WHEREAS, every day in the United States, 43,200 people need life-saving blood transfusions; and,

WHEREAS, the increasing gap between the number of available donors and those in need is reaching crisis levels; but outdated policy turns away all men who have sex with men (MSM) from being a full part of the donor pool; and,

WHEREAS, this exclusion stems from 1970s-era misconceptions and misunderstandings about HIV/AIDS transmission, but current blood screening tests are so effective that the probability of HIV transmission through blood transfusion is so low that it only accounts for one in two million cases; and,

WHEREAS, the Williams Institute estimates that lifting just the blood donation ban could increase the blood supply enough to save more than 650,000 lives annually; and,

WHEREAS, blood, tissue, and organ donor policies are slightly different - blood being the most severe in completely banning MSM individuals - but each discriminates unfairly against healthy and willing MSM individuals; and,

WHEREAS, in 2010 the Advisory Committee on Blood Safety and Availability, a non-partisan group of scientists convened by the Dept. of Health and Human Services concluded that the ban on blood donors should be changed; and,

WHEREAS, in June 2013, the American Medical Association called on the FDA to change the policy, stating that "The lifetime ban on blood donation for men who have sex with men is discriminatory and not based on sound science;" and,

WHEREAS, in August of 2013, U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin and 85 colleagues in Congress submitted a letter to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, urging her to reconsider the discriminatory ban on blood donors citing its prejudiced and unscientific nature; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh urges the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services and the FDA to re-evaluate discriminatory policies around blood, organ, and tissue donations to meet current scientific standards, to ensure safety in the process, and to allow for a larger pool of donors to help with the organ, blood, and tissue shortage crisis.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Will of Council shall be circulated to Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the Food and Drug Administration, and Senator Baldwin.

Sponsored by Councilman Dan Gilman and Council President Bruce Kraus

Co-sponsored by Councilmembers Deb Gross, Theresa Kail-Smith, Natalia Rudiak,
Corey O'Connor, R. Daniel Lavelle, and Rev. Ricky V. Burgess

Bruce Kraus
President of Council

Attest: Mary Beth Doheny
Clerk of Council

In Council, April 14, 2014