

SCR-33-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/12/2022 4:59:18 PM

Testimony for HHH on 4/14/2022 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gerard Silva	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This would make Blood Unsafe for use in Hawaii. You are allowing Contamanted Blood to be allowed for use this should NOT BE ALLOWED . Get ride of who every came up with this. Do thing s the right way or not at all!!!!

House Committee on Health, Human Services, and Homelessness
Thursday, April 14, 2022 at 9:00am
Conference Room 329

RE: Testimony of Rebecca Soon in **SUPPORT** of SCR33, SD1

Aloha nui e Chair Yamane, Vice Chair Tam, and Members of the House Committee on Health, Human Services, and Homelessness:

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide support and testimony for Senate Concurrent Resolution 33, which would urge the Blood Bank of Hawai'i to immediately adopt the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) updated guidance, which shortens or eliminates the Deferral period for certain LGBTQA members of our community from donating blood.

This issue hits me on a personal level. Two close family members are currently battling childhood cancer, which requires them to receive blood transfusions regularly. Many of our family members have become accustomed to donating blood to support them and other children and families desperately in need of blood. Our community hears the constant refrain: "200 blood donors are needed every day". To turn donors away impacts not only potential donors but also so many people in need of blood in our community.

I certainly appreciate the need to ensure the safety of blood being donated for the recipients. The FDA has and continues to study this issue closely, taking safety extremely seriously. Following the 2015 change of the deferral period from permanent to 12-months, two years of data indicated no increased safety risk. In evaluating the recommended change to the 3-month deferral in 2020, the FDA explained:

"The totality of the surveillance information and the experience with a 3-month deferral in other countries, combined with the uniform use of nucleic acid testing for HIV, HBV, and HCV, which can detect each of these viruses well within a 3-month period following initial infection, leads the Agency to conclude that at this time a change to a recommended 3-month deferral is scientifically supported. FDA expects that this change will not be associated with any adverse effect on the safety of the blood supply, and it will continue to monitor the safety of the blood supply using the TTIMS." [Ref: <https://www.fda.gov/media/92490/download>]

When the FDA issued their recommendation in April 2020 for immediate implementation, it seems the Blood Bank of Hawai'i should have followed immediately rather than continue this ban for over two years. Their website states "strict adherence to FDA regulations," and although this was a recommendation, surely coming from the FDA would have carried significant weight. We also know anecdotally that individuals have continued to be told even recently that they have a lifetime deferral despite the FDA change to 12-months in 2015.

How many lives could those members of our community have saved?

The work of the Blood Bank of Hawai'i is extremely important, and the staff and volunteers know better than anyone how desperately our community needs more donors. We deeply hope they use this opportunity to reconsider this practice and instead follow FDA recommendations.

In addition to the need for blood, these policies serve to perpetuate ongoing prejudices against LGBTQA members of our community, including many of my family, friends, and co-workers. While some blood banks have information prominently displayed on their website helping LGBTQA members of our community to navigate the current rules, our Blood Bank of Hawai'i provides almost no information on this topic, and one has to call them and have the humiliating conversation of being rejected to learn of our outdated practices.

Earlier this year, I received a heartbreaking call from one of my staff, who had just had such a conversation with the Blood Bank of Hawai'i and been told, despite being in a married monogamous relationship, that he permanently could not give blood. He was so hurt - I had to hold back tears. We did our own independent research to learn that was incorrect information.

The prejudices that LGBTQA members of our community face are the kinds of biases that lead to bullying among our youth, high rates of suicide, and having over 250 LGBTQA youth who are homeless and being victimized on the streets of Waikīkī every night. This continued othering is dangerous with real and harmful consequences.

I appreciate the leadership of Senator Kidani and the community advocates who brought forward this critical issue and brought voice to a community whose voices are often not heard. While this is a private institution, we know that it requires public support from our government and our community. Your voice is extremely important in joining the urging of the Blood Bank of Hawai'i's leadership to bring equality to our entire community and help meet the needs of our residents and families who desperately need blood here in Hawai'i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to share my support of SRC33.

Me ka ha'aha'a,



Rebecca Justine 'Iolani Soon