

December 7, 2018

Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor  
Minister of Health  
70 Colombine Driveway  
Tunney's Pasture  
Ottawa, ON V1A 0K9

Dear Minister Petitpas Taylor,

It has come to our attention that Canadian Blood Services is seeking permission to alter the blood donation policy for men who have sex with men in order to reduce the deferral period from the current one-year waiting period to a three-month period. It is with great pleasure that I write on behalf of the more than 130,000 members of the British Columbia Federation of Students to share our support for this request.

As you know, in the 2015 federal election your Party committed to fully eliminating the discriminatory deferral for men who have sex with men. Since the election your government has made headway towards this ultimate goal, by reducing the period from five years (since last sexual encounter) to just one year. Our organization saw this as a positive step towards a policy that would focus on behaviour-based risk factors rather than on sexual orientation. Policies such as this must be based on science and research; we see that incremental changes such as this provide CBS the opportunity to advance their research to make more recommendations in the future.

We have appreciated the collaborative nature through which Canadian Blood Services has sought feedback from stakeholders over the past years. As a representative of students, who are amongst the most vocal regarding the current and past policies, I feel that the consultative approach they have taken has provided us with opportunities to have questions answered and to receive the information we need to be comfortable with this change.

Students have been at the forefront of raising awareness of the blood donation policy regarding men who have sex with men. These people are passionate about the issue of equality and the discriminatory nature (real or perceived) of the policy. You can be guaranteed that every step you make towards a complete removal of this deferral will be met with positive response; further, this change will allow many people to donate blood who otherwise wouldn't be able.

I encourage you to approve the change to the MSM deferral policy, as requested by Canadian Blood Services. The research is sound, stakeholders approve, and it brings Health Canada closer to your government's goal of a gender-neutral, behaviour-based risk assessment model.

Kind regards,  
Aran Armutlu  
Chairperson