



Commission on Human Rights | Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

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Statement from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the New York City Commission on Human Rights regarding the FDA Blood Donation Guidelines Revision

April 6, 2020 – The news of the FDA easing its restrictions on blood donation by gay and bisexual men and those who have sex with bisexual men is welcome. This was a policy rooted in bigotry and overcome by science. While there is more to do, it is a step in the right direction and a credit to the advocates who fought for this victory.

The ban on blood donation by gay and bisexual men was enacted in the 1980s under the administration of a president who refused to acknowledge the AIDS crisis as one affecting all Americans, instead blaming one marginalized community and refusing research, testing, and medical resources until it was so widespread as to be uncontrollable.

Reducing the required celibacy period from these groups to donate blood from 12 months to 3 months will enable millions more people to donate blood in this time of desperate need.

A policy steeped in long-held misconceptions, however, is still a policy in need of reconsideration. Shorter deferral periods should be based on science, accurate testing, and a risk assessment of a person’s sexual activity—not a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity. We urge the FDA to adopt a revised policy that eliminates discrimination and allows for as many blood donors as possible in our greatest hour of need.