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PAMELA WALLIN, OC, SOM

SENATOR FOR SASKATCHEWAN
SÉNATRICE DE LA SASKATCHEWAN

Ms. Gergane Sandeva
Network of Rare Blood Disorder Organizations
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June 29, 2018

Dear Ms. Sandeva,

Thank you for your letter on behalf of the Network of Rare Blood Disorder Organizations (NRBDO), dated June 25, 2018, to each of my Senate colleagues. I appreciate you taking the time to add your voice to the debate over Bill S-252 (The Voluntary Blood Donations Act), of which I tabled in the Senate on May 29, 2018. I would like to take this opportunity to respond.

The bill proposes to end the practice of paying donors for their blood or plasma. Although safety is top of mind when we discuss our national blood supply, it is not the main feature of this bill. Protecting the nature of a *voluntary* blood donor system and securing the Canadian blood supply is critical— in fact, four provinces agree. Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, and most recently, British Columbia, have all banned for-profit plasma collection facilities. That accounts for 80 percent of the Canadian population. It is clear that the recommendations of the Krever Inquiry resonated and action was taken.

As you and your members are fully aware of the tainted blood crisis, it is evident we share a similar belief that Canada's national blood donor system should remain voluntary. I would like to note that, through consultation with Canadian Blood Services (CBS), we identified a need to include an exemption for CBS in the proposed legislation. The purpose of this exemption is that, should a national crisis occur, CBS has the ability to provide some kind of remuneration for donors if needed. Moreover, the legislation also provides the caveat to remunerate donors in a "rare circumstance" which is in line with Justice Krever's recommendations.

With that being said, and I think you will agree, the remarkable, caring nature of Canadians is evident during crises, as recent as the Humboldt Broncos bus accident and the Toronto van attack, both in April. Following both tragic events, Canadians responded and came in droves to donor clinics.

The bill as tabled is in line with the recommendations of the Krever Inquiry, the position of Canadian Blood Services, World Health Organization, the International Federation of the Red Cross, the European Blood Alliance and the International Society of Blood Transfusion. Recently, the European Blood Alliance submitted their recommendations to the European Commission asking that the EU take similar measures to protect voluntary blood systems throughout Europe.

Evidence around the world demonstrates that when blood operators implement plasma collection programs, people donate freely and voluntarily. There are wonderful examples of this in Belgium, Australia, New Zealand, The Netherlands, Japan and Quebec, to name a few.

The fact is - the plasma collected by companies like Canadian Plasma Resources will not be used for Canadian patients - this has been confirmed by CBS.

The bill does not jeopardize access to plasma-derived medications, and again, was written with consultation from CBS. The bill ensures that CBS is exempt from the legislation and also has an additional caveat for plasma-derived products which are imported. These measures were added to ensure there are no disruptions in supply. We hope this allays some of your fears.

We recognize that there are different viewpoints and positions among a wide range of stakeholders and patients groups. We look forward to you sharing your concerns to Senators, perhaps at committee stage in the next parliamentary sitting.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Pamela Wallin".

The Honourable Pamela Wallin