

March 19, 2026



RI Department of Health
Three Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908-5097

TTY: 771
www.health.ri.gov

The Honorable Susan R. Donovan, Chair
House Committee on Health and Human Services
State House
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H 7815 – An Act Relating to Health and Safety– Autologous or Direct Blood Donations

Dear Chair Donovan:

Please accept this letter regarding H 7815, legislation that would require all blood banks that facilitate autologous or directed blood donations to comply with a physician's order prescribing an autologous or directed blood donation for a patient.

Autologous blood donation refers to the process where individuals donate their own blood for future use, typically for an upcoming surgery. Directed blood donation is when a patient requests that a specific person, such as a family member or friend, donate blood specifically for their transfusion for an upcoming surgery.

Autologous and directed blood donation has been provided by blood banks in the United States since the early days of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and has been studied extensively. Those data demonstrate that patients may receive autologous or donated blood that they do not need. (For instance, the prospective recipient loses very little blood during the procedure, but the surgeon may feel pressured to transfuse it because it was donated for that purpose, and the transfusion results in an episode of heart failure.) If unused autologous or donated blood is not returned to the blood bank in a timely manner, it may be unusable for other patients in need.

In addition, directed-donation blood has been proven to be no safer than routine blood donations. RIDOH is unaware of any complaints against physicians or hospitals refusing to comply with a physician's order for the collection or infusion of an autologous or directed blood transfusion. Of note, local blood banking and transfusion medicine physicians indicate that there is an added cost to maintaining an inventory and tracking process for these types of donations. RIDOH has not identified any other state with a similar law.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jerome M. Larkin".

Jerome M. Larkin, MD
Director

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services
The Honorable Charlene Lima
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy