

Testimony in favor of Section 1, paragraph C. Bill 5451

My name is Sarah Emmons and I have been a Registered Nurse for 22 years. I have worked at the Red Cross for the past 14 years in Blood Services.

The mission of the American Red Cross, Connecticut Blood Services Region (as stated on their website), is to partner with the community to provide a safe and sufficient blood supply for patients at the states 31 transfusing hospitals and acute care facilities.

It is my job as a licensed RN for the ARC, to ensure that the Red Cross stays true to its mission to keep the blood supply safe and to keep the volunteer blood donors who provide that blood, safe, as well. Therefore, I am here to show my support for proposed Bill # 5451, Section 1C.

It is my absolute belief, based on 14 years of experience, that each and every blood drive should have either an LPN or RN at every blood drive.

It is ironic that in the last 17 years that the Red Cross has been under the FDA's Consent Decree to "clean up its act" for many safety violations, the Red Cross has chosen to replace many of its retiring Charge RN's and LPN's with non licensed, non medically trained, blood collection technicians and team supervisors. These employees lack the nursing judgment, education and expertise that is the core of our profession. It is these qualities that we rely on, to make sound and safe decisions regarding donor eligibility and donor reaction care. In my 14 years with the Red Cross, there have been many times I have used my nursing skills to defer donors who either posed a safety threat to the blood supply or would have their own physical safety compromised had they donated blood. Often these decisions are not found in our printed guidelines and must come from our nursing judgment and experience.

As you ponder the implications of removing a Licensed Nurse from a blood drive, ask yourself: if you or someone you loved, was in need of a pint of blood, would you feel safer knowing that there was a licensed health care professional, screening potential problem donors at the blood drive where that blood was collected? If your son or daughter was going off to school to participate as a blood donor for the first time, would you feel more assured if you knew there was a Licensed Nurse on the premises, to safeguard each step of the donation process? Safety is what our job is all about.