

## Governor Phil Murphy

# Lt. Governor Oliver Joins Coalition of Lieutenant Governors to Urge the US Food and Drug Administration to Lift Discriminatory Ban on Blood Donations

04/13/2020

**TRENTON** – Lt. Governor Sheila Y. Oliver signed on with a national coalition of lieutenant governors urging the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to lift the discriminatory 3-month wait period that gay, bisexual, queer and transgender women have to adhere to before donating blood.

“Simply put, this antiquated mandate lacks any scientific basis and needs to be stopped,” said **Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver, who also serves as Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs**. “In the face of a large-scale crisis with severe blood shortages or not, we should never ostracize our LGBTQ+ community – we should invite them to volunteer to help save lives. We are one New Jersey community – we help each other, no matter sexual orientation or gender identity.”

The letter, penned from 20 lieutenant governors across the country, was addressed to FDA’s Commissioner of Food and Drugs, Dr. Stephen Hahn. The joint statement said, “We write to you today to request that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration remove restrictions prohibiting blood banks from accepting blood and plasma donations from gay, bisexual, and queer men, as well as many transgender individuals, unless they have been celibate for three months. This is an antiquated and discriminatory ban that is not based in scientific evidence. Given the increased demand for blood and plasma donations due to COVID-19, keeping this ban in place is undermining our nation’s blood supply during a severe shortage, which could keep us from saving lives.”

The letter emphasized, “Leading medical organizations have established that this ban is not based in science.” One of those organizations is the American Red Cross which stated, “the American Red Cross believes blood donation eligibility should not be determined by methods that are based upon sexual orientation.”

Furthermore, the letter noted that the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law estimates that should the ban be lifted, an additional 360,000 men would be likely to donate, which could help save the lives of more than one million Americans.

“The FDA’s decision earlier this month to ease restrictions on blood donations from men who have sex with men proves what medical experts have been saying for decades: that the current ban is not based in science but rather discriminatory politics,” said **Garden State Equality**

**Executive Director, Christian Fuscarino.** “The FDA’s policy change is a sign of progress, but the current crisis absolutely demands that we must follow the science and have a complete, immediate end to this archaic, demeaning ban.”

“We applaud and are even more inspired by NJ Lt. Governor Oliver’s continued affirmation of our LGBTQIA communities,” **espoused Bayard Rustin Center for Social Justice Chief Activist Robt Seda-Schreiber.** “At a time when we should be protecting and respecting all of our beautifully diverse communities, this base discrimination cannot and will not be allowed to continue. It is the very definition of draconian, the very essence of discrimination, and indeed an action not based in any science whatsoever but an act of pure denigration. We should never allow such prejudice to dictate public policy but especially not at a time when it will literally cost lives.”

**Lieutenant Governor’s who signed onto the letter are:**

Secretary of State Katie Hobbs  
Arizona

Lt. Governor Eleni Kounalakis  
California

Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz  
Connecticut

Lt. Governor Bethany Hall-Long  
Delaware

Lt. Governor Josh Tenorio  
Guam

Lt. Governor Josh Green  
Hawaii

Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton  
Illinois

Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist II  
Michigan

Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan  
Minnesota

Lt. Governor Mike Cooney  
Montana

Lt. Governor Kate Marshall

Nevada

Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver  
New Jersey

Lt. Governor Howie Morales  
New Mexico

Lt. Governor Kathy Hochul  
New York

Lt. Governor John Fetterman  
Pennsylvania

Lt. Governor Dan McKee  
Rhode Island

Lt. Governor Cyrus Habib  
Washington

Lt. Governor Mandela Barnes  
Wisconsin

Lt. Governor David Zuckerman  
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