



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

## Donate For Those Who Can't: Senator Brad Hoylman and New York Blood Center to Host Blood Drive in Response to Shortage

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL January 8, 2021

| ISSUE: **BLOOD DRIVE, LGBTQ EQUALITY, SENATOR BRAD HOYLMAN, SD 27**

NEW YORK -- Today, Senator Brad Hoylman (D/WFP - Manhattan) announced he is partnering with Congressman Jerrold Nadler, Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer, New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson, Assembly Member Deborah Glick and the New York Blood Center to host a blood drive in the West Village's Westbeth Gallery (57 Bethune St.) on Tuesday, January 12, from 1 PM to 7 PM. Hoylman, one of only two openly gay members of the New York State Senate, cannot donate blood or convalescent plasma himself; the FDA still maintains a discriminatory and outdated policy which restricts blood and plasma donations from some members of the LGBTQ+ community. The blood drive will help with the critical blood and convalescent plasma shortages in New York during the COVID-19 pandemic and raise awareness of the ongoing restrictions on blood donations.

To attend this blood drive, New Yorkers must reserve a spot ahead of time here:

[https://donate.nybc.org/donor/schedules/drive\\_schedule/286741](https://donate.nybc.org/donor/schedules/drive_schedule/286741)

**Senator Brad Hoylman said:** "New York has a severe shortage of blood and the convalescent plasma needed for treating patients COVID-19 pandemic, but the FDA still won't let me give mine. The Red Cross is reporting a 250% increase since October in demand for the convalescent plasma. The New York Blood Center only has three day's supply on hand, about

half of their pre-pandemic numbers. Yet the FDA still clings to their outdated and homophobic policies.

Until the FDA let's me donate, we need LGBTQ+ allies to step up and give on behalf of our community to meet the current blood and plasma shortage. So please join us, donate for those who can't, and help us save lives while we fight injustice."

**Congressmember Jerry Nadler said:** "It is unconscionable for the FDA to ban so many LGBTQ+ New Yorkers from donating blood, doubly so during this pandemic-induced blood shortage. Our society and its laws must move beyond the offensive and incorrect stereotype that automatically links members of the LGBTQ+ community to risky sexual practices and, therefore, to HIV/AIDS. Thank you Senator Hoylman for continuing to raise awareness of this antiquated ban and for encouraging so many allies to donate blood during this current shortage."

**Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer said:** "We all need to do our part to keep our healthcare system working and a big part of that is blood donations. This blood drive raises an important point: that the FDA discriminates against members of the LGBTQ community when it comes to blood donations. Until the FDA changes that, those who are able to donate their blood to save a life should take this opportunity to do so."

**New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson said:** "The FDA restrictions on LGBTQ+ people giving blood are outdated and offensive and they should be lifted immediately. These unfair rules are particularly unhelpful at a time when New York City is low on blood supply, like it is now. I encourage all New Yorkers who can to donate blood as soon as possible. I offer my thanks to Senator Hoylman for organizing this important event and to all those who participate for their help in saving lives."

**Assembly Member Deborah Glick said:** “I am pleased to join my colleagues in encouraging New Yorkers to donate blood that is essential to help with the critical shortages the city is experiencing. Like my colleagues, I have urged the FDA to change their outdated discriminatory policies. Restrictions steeped in homophobia and antiquated beliefs about HIV and AIDS have no scientific basis, and people seeking to aid their communities by donating blood should not be demeaned or excluded, but rather applauded for their willingness to help, especially during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.”

This March, Senator Hoylman sent a [letter to the FDA](#) asking for a changing of the rules that require some members of the LGBTQ+ community to be abstinent for a year before donating blood. Subsequently, the FDA loosened restrictions, allowing men who have sex with men to donate blood after three months of abstinence. Despite that change Hoylman was still rejected from donating blood in May, and Hoylman [subsequently sent another](#) letter to FDA asking to end the celibacy requirement entirely, as is the case in nations like Mexico, Italy, Argentina and South Africa. In October, Hoylman hosted the first “Donate for those Who Can’t” blood drive at the same location. These drives were inspired by a similar effort from California State Senator Scott Wiener.

Reports from late December indicate the FDA is considering lifting the restrictions on some LGBTQ+ Americans, based on the results of a [pilot study](#).

Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 in New York, there have been serious shortages in blood supplies and donations throughout the state, which has resulted in an urgent need for blood donations. Senator Hoylman encourages those who are willing and eligible to consider donating.

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