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Greater Transparency on Deferred Blood Donations the Focus of New Bill

SACRAMENTO – California Senate President pro Tempore Toni G. Atkins (D-San Diego) today introduced SB 851, calling for greater transparency when an individual’s blood donation is deferred.

“Many blood banks and plasma centers in California are experiencing shortages, including in my own community. That’s why I am proud to author SB 851, which will help Californians better understand the circumstances if they are told they are unable to donate blood, and which will also help prevent arbitrary discrimination from blocking safe blood donations,” Atkins said. “SB 851 requires blood banks and plasma centers to provide potential donors with legitimate reasons if they are deemed unable to donate. With SB 851 we can maximize the number of Californians who know if and when they are able to donate blood, and we can ensure that science and safety, not someone’s personal prejudice, are behind decisions affecting the blood donations our communities so badly need.”

When an individual tries to help their neighbors by donating blood, they are sometimes refused and told their donation is being “deferred.” In determining deferrals, which can be permanent or for a limited time, blood banks typically follow the criteria of the Federal Food and Drug Administration. At times, however, these deferrals are made in ways that appear arbitrary, and potentially discriminatory, especially when it comes to members of the LGBTQ+ community. SB 851 requires that blood banks and plasma centers give deferred donors an explanation for their deferral, including the federal criteria and the timing and circumstances under which they would be able to donate.

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Toni G. Atkins is President pro Tempore of the California Senate. Having previously served as Speaker of the California Assembly, she began her tenure in the Senate in 2016. As Senator for District 39, she represents the cities of San Diego, Coronado, Del Mar and Solana Beach. Website of President pro Tempore Toni G. Atkins: www.senate.ca.gov/Atkins