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Assistant Secretary for Health  
Office of Public Health and Science  
Washington D.C. 20201

Mark Brecher, M.D.  
Chair, Advisory Committee on Blood Safety and Availability  
University of North Carolina Hospitals  
101 Manning Drive  
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Dear Dr. Brecher:

Thank you for your letter relaying the recommendations made by the Advisory Committee on Blood Safety and Availability at its January meeting.

The concept of a National Blood Reserve (NBR) recommended by the Committee as proposed by the American Association of Blood Banks Interorganizational Task Force is a momentous undertaking and one that, if successful, will take time and money. We recognize that there are various steps needed to build such a NBR, such as expansion of public awareness to blood donations and achieving an optimal seven day blood supply. While a blood reserve is not the sole responsibility of Government, it is recognized that public/private organization is needed in order to be successful. The level of effort and commitment is recognized and the Department of Health and Human Services, within its authority, will do its part in supporting partnerships.

I understand the Committee's view that reimbursement is a critical component of both blood safety and blood availability. Based on my direction, Dr. Holmberg has been meeting with staff of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and will continue to address blood issues of the Medicare Modernization Act. Recent corrections in CMS coding for blood and blood products, including plasma therapeutic products and their recombinant analogs, has been the direct result of increased attention on the issues.

Once again, thank you for your work. The Secretary and I look forward to receiving future recommendations from your Committee.

Sincerely yours,

Cristina V. Beato, M.D.  
Acting Assistant Secretary for Health