



*Advancing Transfusion and
Cellular Therapies Worldwide*

November 29, 2017

Dear Representative:

AABB urges you to co-sponsor H.R. 4215, which will help protect Medicare beneficiaries' access to bone marrow and cord blood transplants by ensuring that hospitals receive adequate payments for the acquisition of bone marrow and cord blood cells under the Medicare program.

AABB is an international, not-for-profit association representing individuals and institutions involved in the field of transfusion medicine and cellular therapies. The association is committed to improving health through the development and delivery of standards, accreditation, and educational programs that focus on optimizing patient and donor care and safety. AABB individual membership includes physicians, nurses, scientists, researchers, administrators, medical technologists, and other health care providers.

Every year, an average of 1,200 Medicare beneficiaries are in need of a life-saving bone marrow or cord blood transplant from a donor, related or unrelated, for serious blood cancer or disease, which include leukemia, multiple myeloma and sickle cell disease. Many of these patients have no other viable option for treatment.

Unfortunately, under existing Medicare payment policy, hospitals incur significant financial losses when they provide bone marrow and cord blood transplants to Medicare patients. Medicare provides a single payment to a hospital for inpatient bone marrow and cord blood transplants, which is intended to cover donor search and cell acquisition costs as well as the costs associated with the recipient's inpatient stay. However, the costs associated with obtaining the cells generally consume most of the payment, leaving insufficient resources to cover the recipient's 20-30 day inpatient hospitalization. The inadequate payment rates threaten the viability and sustainability of transplant centers, and therefore could reduce patients' access to these important, life-saving services.

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H.R. 4215 would address the flawed payment policy for bone marrow and cord blood transplants by aligning the payment policy for the acquisition of bone marrow and cord blood cells with the policy that applies to the acquisition of solid organs, including living kidney donors. Unlike bone marrow and cord blood transplants, Medicare provides separate payments for the acquisition of solid organs, acknowledging the significant resources required to acquire the organs. H.R. 4215 would require Medicare to provide separate payments for the acquisition of bone marrow and cord blood cells.

AABB encourages you to support H.R. 4215, which will protect Medicare beneficiaries' access to life-saving bone marrow and cord blood transplants. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Leah Stone, Director, Public Policy and Advocacy at 301-215-6554 or lmstone@aabb.org.

Sincerely,

Mary Beth Bassett
President
AABB