

SUBJECT: Blood donations by 16-year-olds

COMMITTEE: Public Health — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 5 ayes — Berlanga, Hirschi, Maxey, McDonald, Rodriguez
0 nays
4 absent — Coleman, Delisi, Glaze, Janek

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 28 — 31-0

WITNESSES: For — Sam Stone, Texas Blood Bank Association
Against — None

BACKGROUND: Family Code sec. 35.03 (a) authorizes minors under the age of 18 to consent to health care services without their parent's permission only under specific conditions. Last session HB 1532 by Coleman authorized 17-year-old minors to consent to blood donation, by amending the blood bank chapter of the Health and Safety Code. The Health and Safety Code was also amended to prohibit compensation to a person younger than 18 for blood donation.

DIGEST: SB 545 would amend the Health and Safety Code to allow persons at least 16 years old to consent to blood donation. (A person younger than 18 years old would still be prohibited from receiving compensation for blood donations.) SB 545 would take immediate effect if approved by two-thirds of the membership of each house.

SUPPORTERS SAY: SB 545 is needed to increase the supply of healthy, disease-free blood. Teenagers are generally healthy and can give blood easily. Donating blood is a very safe procedure, and 16-year-olds, who are authorized to drive cars at that age, are mature enough to decide for themselves whether to participate in blood drives.

The Texas blood supply sometimes drops very low, creating shortages in some areas. Blood supply fluctuates with medical demands related to the

occurrence of surgeries, illnesses, accidents and disasters. For example, in the summer months when the incidence of accidents is high, the blood supply can drop, leaving little reserve. In addition, many surgical patients cannot donate their own blood and worry about the quality of blood they are to receive. The demand for blood is rising as the population grows and as new treatments for cancer and other diseases use increasing amounts of blood and blood products. Lowering the age of parental consent will help avoid shortages.

High school blood drives provide a good source of healthy blood, but many 16-year-olds cannot participate because they lose or forget to obtain parental consent forms. High school drives at the end of the school year serve to help reduce the occurrence of seasonal blood shortages.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

This bill could remove parental authority over the care and treatment of their children. Requiring parental consent for the donation of blood from 16-year-olds does not significantly limit the Texas blood supply.