

# PRESS RELEASE

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## **DOT TO CONVENE A WORKING GROUP TO DEVELOP BEST PRACTICES FOR TRANSPORTING ORGANS AND CERTAIN BLOOD STEM CELL PRODUCTS IN COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT CABINS**

*CBA advocated for the inclusion of blood stem cell products from cord blood*

**CHICAGO, IL, June 18** — The Cord Blood Association (CBA) is pleased to announce that the recent passage of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Act of 2024 (P.L. 118-63) requires the creation of a working group to develop best practices for transporting organs, including blood stem cell products from cord blood, in the cabins of commercial aircrafts to ensure that they will reach their recipients safely.

The bill, signed into law May 16, originally referenced solid organs only, and CBA worked with Congress to ensure the consideration and inclusion of certain blood stem cell products in the development of recommendations for transporting organs in the cabin of aircraft.

The new law directs the U.S. Secretary of Transportation (DOT), in consultation with the FAA Administrator, to convene a working group to assist in the development of best practices for transportation of organs and certain blood stem cell products in the cabins of commercial aircrafts. CBA also worked with Congress to ensure that CBA and National Cord Blood Inventory (NCBI) participate in this working group. The law requires the working group to submit a report on these best practices to the DOT Secretary not later than one year after it convenes.

Historically, organs and blood stem cells from cord blood could be brought through airport security and properly and safely loaded onto planes. Since the COVID-19 pandemic and the increase in cargo being shipped, there has been an increased incidence of delayed life-saving cord blood cell shipments. Dry shipping containers (known as dry shippers) used to transport temperature-controlled, time-sensitive cell therapies currently compete with other goods for limited cargo space and often do not make their first scheduled flight. These shipping delays affect all temperature-controlled, human biologic products, but especially those being shipped internationally. All transportation-related issues are significant because they may impact or delay patient treatment, result in increased time and costs for cord blood banks and manufacturers, and are largely avoidable. Securing the safe, reliable, and timely delivery of cord blood units and other cryopreserved cell therapies is essential to supporting optimal patient outcomes. With representation on this working group, CBA will work to address these and other important issues.

CBA applauds our legislators for including safe transportation of blood stem cell products from cord blood in the reauthorization of this bill and is pleased to have played a role in their addition. Blood stem cell products are vital for life-saving blood stem cell transplants for patients with cancer, serious blood disorders, inherited immunodeficiency diseases, and certain inherited metabolic diseases. Removing barriers and applying special consideration for transportation of blood stem cells from cord blood donors in the main cabins of aircrafts will increase the safety and efficiency of transporting these life-saving products. It is a devastating loss when life-saving stem cells are damaged by transportation in aircraft cargo holds.

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See the final language regarding transportation of organs and blood stem cell products below.

Learn more about how stem cells from cord blood are stored and transplanted to save lives at [www.cb-association.org](http://www.cb-association.org).

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The [Cord Blood Association](http://www.cb-association.org) is an international nonprofit organization that promotes both public and family cord blood banking and accelerates the use of cord blood and birthing tissues to benefit patients and advance medicine. Our members include both public and family banks and individuals in and served by the cord blood community including cord blood bank personnel, research investigators, laboratory technicians, patients, donors, regulatory officials, vendors, and healthcare providers, such as transplant physicians, obstetricians, pediatricians, nurses, and midwives. Learn more about cord blood at <https://www.cb-association.org/about-cord-blood> and about the association at <https://www.cb-association.org>.

**Not for publication:**

For more information on this release or to interview with CBA President Dr. Joanne Kurtzberg, MD, please email [lrstau@cb-association.org](mailto:lrstau@cb-association.org).

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The final language in [P.L. 118-63](#), the Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization Act of 2024, states:

**SEC. 1102. TRANSPORTATION OF ORGANS.**

(a) IN GENERAL.— Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary, in consultation with the Administrator, shall convene a working group (in this section referred to as the “working group”) to assist in developing best practices for transportation of an organ in the cabin of an aircraft operating under part 121 of title 14, Code of Federal Regulations, and to identify regulations that hinder such transportation, if applicable.

(b) COMPOSITION. —The working group shall be comprised of representatives from the following:

- (1) Air carriers operating under part 121 of title 14, Code of Federal Regulations.
- (2) Organ procurement organizations.
- (3) Organ transplant hospitals.
- (4) Flight attendants.
- (5) Other relevant Federal agencies involved in organ transportation or air travel.

(c) CONSIDERATIONS. —In establishing the best practices described in subsection (a), the working group shall consider—

- (1) a safe, standardized process for acceptance, handling, management, and transportation of an organ in the cabin of such aircraft; and
- (2) protocols to ensure the safe and timely transport of an organ in the cabin of such aircraft, including through connecting flights.

(d) RECOMMENDATIONS.—Not later than 1 year after the convening of the working group, such working group shall submit to the Secretary a report containing recommendations for the best practices described in subsection (a).

(e) DEFINITION OF ORGAN. —In this section, the term “organ”—

- (1) has the meaning given such term in section 121.2 of title 42, Code of Federal Regulations; and
- (2) includes—
  - (A) organ-related tissue;
  - (B) bone marrow; and
  - (C) human cells, tissues, or cellular or tissue-based products (as such term is defined in section 1271.3(d) of title 21, Code of Federal Regulations).