

For Immediate Release

September 24, 2020

**National Marrow Donor Program/Be The Match Urges Congress to Quickly Pass
Reauthorization Bill to Protect Access to Life Saving Bone Marrow and Cord Blood
Transplants**

MINNEAPOLIS-September 24, 2020: Today, Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) introduced the TRANSPLANT Act (S. 4762), which will provide for the timely reauthorization of the C.W. Bill Young Transplantation Program (Program). The National Marrow Donor Program®(NMDP)/Be The Match® applauds the leadership of Senator Reed and urges Congress to act quickly to reauthorize the Program, which expires on September 30th.

“We appreciate the leadership of the bill’s sponsor Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI), and the bipartisan support of the bill’s lead cosponsors Sens. Richard Burr (R-NC), Tina Smith (D-MN), and Tim Scott (R-SC),” said NMDP/Be The Match Chief Policy Officer Brian Lindberg.

The Program provides access to live-saving bone marrow, peripheral blood stem cell (PBSC) and cord blood transplants to those living with one of the more than 70 blood cancers or blood disorders for which a transplant is the only curative option.

Since its inception in the mid-1980s, NMDP/Be The Match has been entrusted by Congress to operate the Program and has facilitated more than 100,000 life-saving transplants to give patients with otherwise fatal blood cancers or blood disorders a second chance at life.

The COVID-19 pandemic – with increasingly restrictive travel bans, border closings, and the declining availability of scheduled commercial passenger aviation service on international and domestic routes - has created unprecedented obstacles for NMDP/ Be The Match in delivering life-saving cells to the patients who need them.

This new reality creates a web of increasingly complex challenges in facilitating the timely collection and delivery of bone marrow products to patients who are in the midst of treatment protocols or whose conditions have deteriorated to the point that a bone marrow transplant is the only course of treatment that will save their life.

“During the pandemic, we have been able to mitigate any disruption to our mission and complete more than 3,000 lifesaving therapies without missing a single delivery,” continued Lindberg. “We have been able to do that, in large part, because of our designation in Federal law as the nation’s bone marrow registry. Unfortunately, that designation will lapse with the expiration of our Federal authorization on September 30, 2020.”

This designation has helped Be The Match to care for our patients during the pandemic by:

- Being granted a waiver in March from the Director of the Centers for Disease Control to the European Travel Ban that was issued by the President. The waiver was issued in “the national

interest” to allow international bone marrow couriers to travel to and from the United States to deliver cellular products from abroad to U.S. patients.

- Receive CISA classification by the Department of Homeland Security as Critical Infrastructure for our program to include “Donors of blood, bone marrow, blood stem cell, or plasma, and the workers of the organizations that operate and manage related activities.”
- Being authorized by a subcontract with the Department of Health and Human Services to use private aircraft donated to the government, renewed on a monthly basis, to deliver life-saving cells to patients when commercial flights were not available.
- Be able to access support from U.S. Embassies and Consulates to liaison with host governments to facilitate timely travel authorizations for individual donor and courier travel and to coordinate private and/or humanitarian flights into and out of countries that have closed their borders to international travel.
- Secure clearance from U.S. Customs and Border Protection to deliver bone marrow and blood stem cells from Canada to the United States.

“Our ability to call upon our Federal partners in these extreme circumstances, and our standing in the eyes of foreign governments where we must operate, could be compromised after September 30th if our authorization expires and we are no longer technically designated as the Nation’s registry,” said Lindberg. “This could put at risk our ability to continue to ensure the timely delivery of life-saving cellular products to otherwise terminally ill patients here and throughout the world.

“Ensuring access to cellular therapy is critical for the patients we serve,” continued Lindberg. “Congress must move immediately to reauthorize these programs to expand the number of adult volunteer donors and cord blood units on the national registry so that every American who needs a transplant can find a match.”

About Be The Match®

For people with life-threatening blood cancers—like leukemia and lymphoma—or other diseases, a cure exists. Be The Match connects patients with their donor match for a life-saving marrow or umbilical cord blood transplant. People can contribute to the cure as a member of the Be The Match Registry®, financial contributor or volunteer. Be The Match provides patients and their families one-on-one support, education, and guidance before, during and after transplant.

Be The Match is operated by the National Marrow Donor Program® (NMDP), a nonprofit organization that matches patients with donors, educates health care professionals and conducts research through its research program, CIBMTR® (Center for International Blood and Marrow Transplant Research®), so more lives can be saved. To learn more about the cure, visit [BeTheMatch.org](https://www.BeTheMatch.org) or call 1 (800) MARROW-2.