Paid vs Unpaid Donations

Why doesn’t Michigan Blood pay donors, like plasma centers do?
The FDA requires blood components to be labeled as either a “paid” or “voluntary” donation. On the basis of current standards for patient care, hospitals overwhelmingly choose blood labeled “volunteer donor” for transfusions to their patients. This is based on the assumption that when donors are not being paid to roll up their sleeves, they are donating for altruistic reasons and are more likely to answer the health-related and lifestyle-related questions honestly. Those questions are the basis of screening for blood safety.

Plasma centers have different criteria for donor eligibility, and the plasma they collect does not go to hospitals for transfusion to patients. It goes to pharmaceutical companies for research and for the manufacturing of clotting-factor drugs.

What people should know
• Blood donations at nonprofit community blood banks (like Michigan Blood) and plasma donations at for-profit plasma centers are collected differently, tested and processed differently, and result in different products with different uses.
• Throughout the US, volunteer (unpaid) donors are the source of the entire community blood supply that hospitals depend on for transfusion to patients.
• According to America’s Blood Centers, time and testing have demonstrated repeatedly that the safest blood comes from volunteer donors.
• The general blood supply in the US comes entirely from volunteer donors giving at nonprofit blood banks, like Michigan Blood.