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Dr. Kirsty Duncan Tables Private Member's Bill on Sickle Cell Disease and Thalassemic Disorders

OTTAWA - Dr. Kirsty Duncan, Member of Parliament for Etobicoke North, tabled her Private Member's Bill today, which calls on the government to create a Comprehensive National Strategy for Sickle Cell Disease and Thalassemic Disorders.

Sickle cell disease is a painful and deadly genetic blood disorder that affects approximately 100,000 people in North America. People living with sickle cell disease are extremely vulnerable to infection, and have periodic health crises that cause great pain and difficulty breathing.

Thalassemias are also inherited blood disorders, which cause the body to make fewer healthy red blood cells than normal. People who have Thalassemias can have mild or severe anemia, and complications are frequent.

"I know sickle cell disease, as I lost childhood friends to this disease—and have thus never turned down an opportunity to tell people about sickle cell disease, or to donate to finding a cure," said Dr. Duncan. "This bill aims to address the challenges faced by children and adults living with these diseases, and their families, as well as raise awareness of these disorders."

"A National Strategy for these disorders would be very helpful to thousands of Canadians," said the Honourable Marlene Jennings, MP. "My family has personal experience with Sickle Cell Disease, and it can be hard to deal with without support.."

"Patients with sickle cell, thalassemia and related blood disorders are doubly, even triply disadvantaged in terms of health services. These are rare life-threatening diseases that mostly affect visible minorities and immigrants," said Durhane Wong-Rieger, President Canadian Organization for Rare Disorders. "A national strategy for diagnosis and care is essential to assuring equitable and effective health and social services."