

October 17, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

As HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis and other organizations dedicated to improved public health outcomes for all Americans, we are writing to urge you to oppose any attempts to restore the ban on use of federal funds for syringe services programs – a proven, life-saving approach to preventing transmission of HIV and viral hepatitis, two of the major infectious disease threats facing our nation.

Current policy provides state and local governments the option of using federal funds for syringe services programs where in accordance with local policy. Several states use this flexibility to support this effective intervention as part of comprehensive strategies to address their local epidemics. We were pleased that, with your leadership, a move earlier this year to ban federal funding for syringe services programs for FY2011 was defeated. Unfortunately, three FY2012 appropriations bills in the House (Labor-HHS, Financial Services, and State/Foreign Operations) threaten to restore the ban. Once again, we need your leadership to assure that science drives U.S. policy in public health.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 12% of all new HIV infections in the United States occur among injection drug users (IDUs). Injection drug use remains the leading cause of new hepatitis C infections. Globally, injection drug use accounts for 10% of all HIV infections. Outside sub-Saharan Africa, one in three new HIV infections is the result of unsafe injection. Effective prevention for the HIV and hepatitis C epidemics among IDUs and their partners requires a combination of interventions including sterile syringe access, counseling and testing, and drug addiction treatment.

Numerous scientific studies, including several studies funded by the federal government, have established that syringe services programs, when implemented as part of a comprehensive HIV/AIDS prevention strategy, are an effective HIV prevention intervention and do not promote drug use. This position is confirmed by leading scientific experts including three former Surgeons General. Surgeon General Regina Benjamin has certified that syringe services programs do indeed reduce HIV transmission and do not increase drug use. Syringe services programs also help people access health services including treatment for addiction. Evidence further demonstrates that syringe exchange programs can advance public safety by taking syringes off the street and reducing the likelihood of injury to law enforcement officers. Please stand with us in opposing any restoration of the ban on use of federal or District of Columbia funds for syringe services programs as you negotiate FY2012 appropriations legislation.

Sincerely,

A Brave New Day (Jackson, MS)
ACT UP Philadelphia
Advocates for Youth
AIDS Action Baltimore
AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts (Boston, MA)
AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth, & Families
AIDS Coalition of Southwestern Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh, PA)
AIDS Community Research Initiative of America
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
The AIDS Institute
AIDS Project Los Angeles
AIDS Task Force (Wheeling, WV)
AIDS Talk Force of Greater Cleveland
AIDS United
American Civil Liberties Union
The American Humanist Association
American Liver Foundation
American Medical Student Association (AMSA)
American Psychological Association
American Social Health Association
amfAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research
Amida Care (New York, NY)
ANAC – Association of Nurses in AIDS Care
The Arkansas HIV Community Advocates
Asia Catalyst
Atlanta Harm Reduction Coalition, Inc.
Austin Harm Reduction Coalition (Austin, TX)
AVAC: Global Advocacy for HIV Prevention
Bailey House, Inc. (New York, NY)
Beshabi Transition to Hope (Philadelphia, PA)
Bethany Place (Belleville, IL)
Brandywine Counseling & Community Services (Wilmington, DE)
California Association of Alcohol and Drug Program Executives
California Hepatitis Alliance
Camp Corazones, Inc. (Santa Fe, NM)
CANN – Community Access National Network
CARES of Southwest Michigan (Benton Harbor, MI)
Caring Ambassadors Program, Inc. (Oregon City, OR)
Catholic Charities AIDS Services
Center for Health Justice (Los Angeles, LA)
The Center for HIV Law & Policy
The CHOW Project
City of Hartford Commission on HIV/AIDS (Hartford, CT)
CitiWide Harm Reduction (Bronx, NY)

Colorado AIDS Project (Denver, CO)
Community Health Action of Staten Island (Staten Island, NY)
Community Health Awareness Group (CHAG) (Detroit, MI)
The Community HIV/Hepatitis Advocates of Iowa Network (CHAIN)
DC Appleseed Center for Law and Justice
Delaware HIV Consortium
Downtown Manhattan HCV Support Group (Manhattan, NY)
Drug Policy Alliance
Eastern Maine AIDS Network, Penobscot Community Health Care (Bangor, ME)
Elkhart County Health Department (Elkhart, IN)
Exponents (New York, NY)
Families and Youth, Inc. (Las Cruces, NM)
Family and Medical Counseling Service, Inc. (Washington, DC)
Frannie Peabody Center (Portland, ME)
Gay Men's Health Crisis
Georgia AIDS Coalition (Snellville, GA)
Georgia Equality (Atlanta, GA)
Georgia Supportive Housing Association (Atlanta, GA)
Harlem United Community AIDS Center (New York, NY)
Harm Reduction Action Center (Denver, CO)
Harm Reduction Coalition
Harm Reduction Institute (Indianapolis, IN)
Harm Reduction Sisters – Morpheus Project (Minneapolis, MN)
Hawaii Island HIV/AIDS Foundation (Kailua Kona, HI)
HCV & HBV Support Group, O'Connor Hospital (Delhi, NY)
H.E.A.L.S. of the South
Health GAP
HealthReach Harm Reduction (Augusta, ME)
HealthHIV
Healthy Rhythm Consulting and Community Art Gallery (Fairfield, TX)
Hepatitis B Foundation (Doylestown, PA)
Hepatitis B Initiative of Washington, DC (HBI-DC)
Hepatitis C Association (Scotch Plain, NJ)
Hepatitis Education Project (Seattle, WA)
Hep C Connection (Denver, CO)
Hep Free Hawai'i (Honolulu, Hawai'i)
HIPS (Helping Individual Prostitutes Survive)
HIV/AIDS Resource Center (Ypsilanti, MI)
HIV Education and Prevention Project of Alameda County (HEPPAC) (Oakland, CA)
HIV Medicine Association
HIV Prevention Justice Alliance
Human Rights Campaign
Hyacinth AIDS Foundation (New Brunswick, NJ)
Interior AIDS Association (Fairbanks, AK)
International Center for Advancement of Addiction Treatment (New York, NY)
The International HIV/AIDS Alliance

Justice Resource Institute (Boston, MA)
Latino Commission on AIDS
Legacy Community Health Services, Inc. (Houston, TX)
The Living Affected Corporation (Little Rock, AR)
Long Island Minority AIDS Coalition (Lindenhurst, NY)
Louisiana AIDS Advocacy Network
Malama Pono Health Services (Lihue, HI)
Michigan AIDS Coalition (Ferndale, MI)
Minnesota AIDS Project (Minneapolis, MN)
Missouri Hepatitis C Alliance (Columbia, MO)
The Momentum Project (New York, NY)
Montefiore Medical Group, Care for the Homeless Program (Bronx, NY)
Mount Sinai Medical Center Jack Martin Co-infection Clinic (New York, NY)
Nashville Cares
National Alliance for HIV Education and Workforce Development
National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors
National Association of County and City Health Officials
The National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA)
The National Center for Transgender Equality
National Latino AIDS Action Network (NLAAN)
National Minority AIDS Council
The National Native American AIDS Prevention Center (Denver, CO)
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable
Needle Exchange Program of Asheville, NC
New Mexico Hepatitis C Alliance
New York Harm Reduction Educators (NYHRE) (Bronx, NY)
New York State Department of Health AIDS Institute
North American Syringe Exchange Network
North Carolina AIDS Action Network
North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition
Open Society Policy Center
OraSure Technologies
Partnership for Minority HIV/AIDS Prevention (Pittsburgh, PA)
Pasco World AIDS Day Planning Committee (Pasco County, FL)
Point Defiance AIDS Projects (Tacoma, WA)
Positive Health Clinic (Pittsburgh, PA)
Praxis Housing Initiatives, Inc. (New York, NY)
Prevention Point Philadelphia
Prevention Point Pittsburgh
Project Inform
Sacred Spirits First Nations Coalition (White Earth Ojibwe Reservation)
San Francisco AIDS Foundation
San Francisco Drug Users' Union
San Francisco Hepatitis C Task Force
Service Rendered, Inc. (Burlington, VT)
Servicios de la Raza (Denver, CO)

Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)
SisterLove, Inc. (Atlanta, GA)
Someone Cares, Inc. (Atlanta, GA)
South Jersey AIDS Alliance (Millville, NJ)
Southern Colorado AIDS Project (Colorado Springs, CO)
Spectrum Youth & Family Services (Burlington, VT)
St. Ann's Corner of Harm Reduction (Bronx, NY)
Status C Unknown (Medford, NY)
Students for Sensible Drug Policy
Tarzana Treatment Centers (Tarzana, CA)
The Tennessee AIDS Advocacy Network
Touro College of Pharmacy (New York, NY)
Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico (Albuquerque, NM)
Treatment Action Group (TAG)
Triad Health Project (Greensboro, NC)
Trust for America's Health
Upstate New York Hepatitis C Awareness Project (Delancey, NY)
Urban Coalition for HIV/AIDS Prevention Services
Vermont CARES (Burlington, VT)
Vermont PWA Coalition (Montpelier, VT)
VillageCare (New York, NY)
VOCAL-NY (Voices of Community Activists & Leaders)
Washington AIDS Partnership (Washington, DC)
Washington Heights CORNER Project (Manhattan, NY)
Western North Carolina AIDS Project
The Williamsbridge Club of the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc.
Windham Harm Reduction Coalition (Willimantic, CT)
Women's Initiative to Stop HIV/AIDS of New York
Women With a Vision, Inc. (New Orleans, LA)