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COALITION ESTABLISHES JULY 2012 AS NATIONAL HIV AWARENESS MONTH

Community Leaders Issue Call to Heighten Awareness of Domestic HIV Epidemic

Washington, DC. November 30 – On the eve of World AIDS Day, a day the global community observes the impact of the AIDS pandemic worldwide, a coalition of national AIDS organizations announces a complementary effort to address the domestic HIV/AIDS epidemic by establishing July 2012 as National HIV Awareness Month. The goal of National HIV Awareness Month is to engage civil society and the private sector in the United States to create and invest in broad-scale public awareness of HIV/AIDS, end HIV stigma and discrimination and engage new stakeholders in the fight against the disease, with the ultimate vision of ending the epidemic.

July 2012 marks the first time the International AIDS conference will take place in the United States in more than 20 years. It will also be the second anniversary of the release by President Obama of the United States' first National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS). The NHAS provides a framework upon which the nation can realize the bold vision that *"the United States will become a place where new HIV infections are rare and when they do occur, every person, regardless of age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or socio-economic circumstance, will have unfettered access to high quality, life-extending care, free from stigma and discrimination."*

"It is vital that we engage stakeholders across sectors if we hope to execute the ambitious goals of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy," said Christopher Bates, executive director of the President's Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS (PACHA). "The development and release of the strategy was just the beginning—its success depends on commitment of our society, not just the efforts of the federal government."

The Coalition for National HIV Awareness Month is issuing a challenge to civil society and the private sector to create and invest in new and innovative awareness, testing, and public engagement initiatives focused on addressing the domestic HIV/AIDS crisis and fostering a compassionate response over the course of National HIV Awareness Month.

Since the explosion of the global pandemic, many Americans have come to view HIV/AIDS as a problem solely affecting the developing world. National HIV Awareness Month will serve as a platform to engage our communities and organizations, the private and public sectors, and to

reach out to the American public-at-large, many of whom are not being reached by current HIV education efforts.

“HIV continues to persist in all corners of the United States, yet most citizens are completely unaware of the impact of HIV here at home,” said Dawn Averitt Bridge, founder of the Coalition for National HIV Awareness Month and founder and chair of the board of The Well Project. “We are establishing National HIV Awareness Month to create a broad public discourse on HIV and AIDS domestically. We are fighting an almost entirely preventable disease that needlessly devastates families and communities because so many Americans are simply unaware of their HIV status, or are unable to access appropriate treatment and care due to a wide range of societal and structural barriers, including poverty and stigma. We have a responsibility to engage the American public in this fight and turn the tide of the domestic epidemic.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are more than 1.2 million people living with HIV in the United States and approximately 50,000 people are newly infected every year. African Americans are disproportionately affected by HIV – while representing approximately 14 percent of the population, they account for approximately 44 percent of new infections. Although there have been significant treatment advances in the 30 years since the first cases emerged, HIV is still a significant cause of death in some populations – it was the third leading cause of death for African-American men and women age 35-44 and the fourth leading cause of death for Latina women age 35-44, according to CDC’s most recent statistics.

About the Coalition for National HIV Awareness Month

The Coalition for National HIV Awareness Month is a group of organizations committed to addressing the domestic HIV/AIDS crisis. The group is establishing July 2012 as National HIV Awareness Month to create broad-scale public awareness of the domestic impact of HIV/AIDS, end HIV stigma and discrimination, and engage new stakeholders in the fight against the disease, with the ultimate vision of ending the epidemic. Current members of the coalition include AIDS United, amfAR, Black AIDS Institute, HealthHIV, Latino Commission on AIDS, Magic Johnson Foundation, National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS (NAPWA), National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS, National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC), Pediatric AIDS Chicago Prevention Initiative, The Well Project, 30 for 30, Treatment Access Expansion Project, and U.S. Positive Women’s Network. For more information, please visit www.nationalhivawarenessmonth.org.

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