Friend-of-the-Court Brief Challenges Missouri's "Draconian" HIV Crime Law

April 22, 2016

The Center for HIV Law and Policy (CHLP) filed a friend-of-the-court brief supporting Michael Johnson, a former college wrestler in Missouri who was sentenced last year to 30 years for infecting one sex partner with HIV and putting four others at risk.

According to a CHLP press release, 22 national and local organizations joined CHLP on the amicus brief, including the American Academy of HIV Medicine and the LGBT civil rights group Human Rights Campaign.

According to the Johnson amicus brief, Missouri's HIV criminal law is irrational and singles out a specific group of people for punitive treatment based on their identity or health status, which is against federal law.

"It is an honor to be part of this effort and to take a stand against a law that is at odds with everything we know about HIV today—how to encourage people to get tested, how to treat it, how it is transmitted, and how to prevent transmission from happening," said Terrance Moore of the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors in the CHLP press release.

Mayo Schreiber, CHLP's deputy director and the lead attorney on the case, added, "It is hard to believe that laws like this still exist and that a young person can get the equivalent of a life sentence, as they would for first or second degree murder in Missouri, for a conviction of unintentionally transmitting and exposing willing sexual partners to HIV. When properly treated, HIV is a manageable medical condition that allows for a long life expectancy."

The organizations submitting the amicus brief on behalf of Michael Johnson are:

- AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania
- American Academy of HIV Medicine
- American Civil Liberties Union of Missouri Foundation
- Athlete Ally

- Black AIDS Institute
- Center for Constitutional Rights
- Center for HIV Law and Policy
- Counter Narrative Project
- Dr. Jeffrey Birnbaum
- Empower Missouri
- GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders
- GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality
- Grace
- Human Rights Campaign
- Missouri HIV Justice Coalition
- National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors
- National Black Justice Coalition
- National Center for Lesbian Rights
- National LGBTQ Task Force
- One Struggle KC
- Treatment Action Group
- William Way LGBT Community Center
- Women With A Vision

To read POZ's previous newsfeed item on the Johnson trial, including reader feedback, click here.

To read the POZ.com cross post of The Counter Narrative Project's open letter of support to Johnson, click here.

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