Nationwide HIV Cure and Aging Advocacy Initiative Planned; Scholarships Available

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Treatment Action Group (TAG), a New York City–based organization of activists, is urging advocates from all 50 states to join a leadership network that will work closely with members of Congress to advance aging- and cure-related HIV research. The initiative will begin with a three-day gathering October 11 to 13 in Washington, DC, for which scholarships are available.

"Historically," TAG explains in a statement introducing the initiative, "federal research funding is considered a wise investment for the future health of the nation, and has enjoyed strong bi-partisan support from lawmakers in Congress. However, with the recent economic crisis and mandates on short-sighted spending cuts, funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), where much of AIDS research happens, is in serious jeopardy."

While there have always been members of Congress who have steadfastly supported the NIH, TAG contends, many are no longer in office. What's needed—and groups like TAG cannot do this alone—is a concerted effort by people living with HIV/AIDS and advocates from across the nation to "find new allies and reactivate long-standing support in Congress." In the absence of such efforts, "scientific advances necessary for the cure, and desperately needed new interventions for HIV and aging related illnesses, will die on the vines of discovery."

TAG's new initiative hopes to bridge the gap between people living with HIV and people elected to Congress. It aims to build a national network of HIV/AIDS activists and other leaders committed to working with Congressional representatives in Washington, DC, and in their home states to build grassroots support.

This will be a year-round campaign, and participants will need to commit, on average, two hours of their time per week.

Full scholarships covering round-trip travel, two nights in a hotel and per diem are being awarded in support of the three-day visit to Capitol Hill in October. The deadline for submitting applications is September 2.

Scholarship recipients will also receive individual assistance on effective message development

before the DC visit, ongoing training and support online, as well as skills-building sessions via conference calls and webinars.

Priorities will be given to people from the following states: Alabama, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas.

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