Latino Activists Criticize Revised U.S. HIV/AIDS Rates

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While the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) revealed in early August that the rate of HIV infections in the United States was 40 percent higher than previously estimated, Latino community leaders say that omitting Puerto Rico from the report dangerously underplays HIV/AIDS prevalence among Latino people, the Orlando Sentinel reports.

“The number the CDC came up with doesn’t fully reflect the severity of this epidemic among Latinos,” says Latino Commission on AIDS vice president Guillermo Chacón. “This report is not acceptable. Particularly at a time when the country is getting ready to elect a new White House tenant. New policies are being formulated based, precisely, on these numbers.”

According to the article, the rate of annual infections among Latinos jumps from 17.3 percent to 22 percent when Puerto Rico’s new cases are taken into account. Because the CDC’s report does not reflect the latter—and higher—rate, treatment and prevention services for Latinos may not receive necessary funding.

On August 22, officials announced that Puerto Rico would join eight states no longer receiving federal funding for the CDC’s advanced HIV monitoring system, on which the new incidence rates were based. The CDC says that it uses census population estimates to calculate infection rates under the new system, but census data in Puerto Rico is collected differently than it is in the continental United States, rendering the island’s data incompatible.

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