The Time Is Now

The vice president of Policy and Advocacy at AIDS United on steering the course for an AIDS-free generation with national advocacy, local organizing and strategic grant-making in 2012.

January 10, 2012 By Ronald Johnson

We are less than two weeks into 2012, and it is already shaping up to be a pivotal one for HIV/AIDS. The end of 2011 saw the scientific advances that gave us a real vision for an AIDS-free generation, but also saw the deplorable reinstatement of the ban on the use of federal funds for syringe exchange programs. The International AIDS Conference will be in Washington D.C. in July, smack dab in the middle of the Presidential election season.

We are in for a bumpy ride, and AIDS United fully intends to take a leadership role in steering the course of that ride. And part of steering that course will be to maximize our core strengths of national advocacy, regional organizing and strategic grantmaking to ensure sound HIV/AIDS policy that helps people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS in the United States access the life-saving prevention, care and treatment services that they need and deserve.

Our regional and national advocacy activities are informed by each other, are driven by our strategic plan, and are aligned with our programmatic work. With a particular focus on Black men who have sex with men, women of color, and the Southern region of the United States, we have prioritized our advocacy work to target the following areas in 2012: Budget and Appropriations, Evidence-Based Prevention, Ryan White Program Reauthorization, Voter Education, and Re-envisioning HIV/AIDS. Our activities for each priority area are outlined below. You can download a PDF document, which includes several examples of AIDS United's policy-focused programmatic initiatives by clicking here.

The time is now. Our priorities are outlined, our actions are clear. And we need YOU! To achieve our bold mission of ending the domestic HIV epidemic, we know it will take teamwork. Teamwork to educate lawmakers. Teamwork to organize people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. Teamwork to help give the HIV/AIDS community the increasingly louder voice it will need to end the epidemic. By joining with AIDS United, you demonstrate your commitment, provide critical insight, and, most importantly, amplify our voice as we fight the setbacks and push forward on scientific advances. As an advocate or a policy partner with AIDS United, you will help us zero in our 2012 policy priorities, and end the AIDS epidemic in the United States.

Budget and Appropriations

- We will advocate for a balanced approach to deficit reduction in the implementation of the Budget Control Act.
- We will ensure that the budget and appropriations process and efforts to reduce the federal deficit are responsive to the goals of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS) and health care reform, and to the needs of vulnerable populations.
- We will advocate for adequate funding for the Corporation for National and Community Service (which includes the Social Innovation Fund and AmeriCorps)

Evidence-Based Prevention

- We will promote policies to reduce new HIV infections through a combination of behavioral, biomedical, and structural strategies.
- We will advocate for lifting the ban on federal funding for syringe exchange programs.
- We will ensure that biomedical prevention interventions that use anti-retroviral strategies (Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), vaginal and rectal microbicides, and treatment as prevention) in combination with primary prevention activities are researched as viable, endorsable strategies for preventing transmission of HIV among populations most at risk for acquiring the virus.

Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Reauthorization

- We will strengthen the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program as a transition to full implementation of health care reform.
- We will ensure that the Ryan White program continues as a safety net for people living with HIV who remain uninsured or underinsured.
- We will lead the charge for community consensus on a reauthorization package for the Ryan White Program in 2013.

Voter Education

- We will promote voter education and participation for people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS in the 2012 elections.

- We will educate voters by developing and distributing voter toolkits and guidelines about candidate positions on issues that impact the response to HIV/AIDS.
- We will have a leadership presence at the Republican and Democratic National Conventions to ensure visibility of HIV/AIDS in candidate platforms.

Re-envisioning HIV/AIDS

- We will advocate for policies that reposition HIV/AIDS prevention and care in the context of prevention and management of other chronic diseases and co-morbidities of HIV.
- We will ensure that states' Essential Health Benefits packages meet the medical needs of people living with HIV/AIDS.
- We will promote coordination with other chronic diseases and co-morbidities of HIV through the Health Care Reform Partnership Project.

Additional Policy Initiatives

We will also commit to playing a strong supportive and partnering role for other HIV/AIDS-related policies, and advocate for:

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