



AIDS Advocates Call Upon Hillary Clinton to Make Ending the Epidemic Priority

March 15, 2016 By [Peter Staley](#)

Similar letters will be going to all the candidates soon.

March 14, 2016

Secretary Hillary Clinton
Hillary for America
Post Office Box 5256
New York, NY 10185-5256

Dear Secretary Clinton:

We are longtime HIV/AIDS survivors, family members, friends, and partners of loved ones lost to the AIDS epidemic over the past 35 years, and advocates for the 1.2 million Americans still living with HIV and those around the world still facing the AIDS crisis.* We write to you in the sincere hope that we can work together to transform the pain caused by your March 11th mischaracterization of the Reagans' role in the AIDS crisis into an urgently needed public discussion of a plan to end the United States HIV epidemic by the year 2025.

As you have acknowledged over the past several days, in order to realize a viable vision for our future together, the darkest time in our shared history of AIDS must be remembered with accuracy, and we must be able to acknowledge the true heroes and successful strategies amassed in the fight against HIV, both past and present. President Reagan did not utter the words "AIDS" or "HIV" publicly until 1985, and his first speech about HIV/AIDS was not given until 1987, by which point over 40,000 people had died of AIDS-related causes.

Silence still equals death, Secretary Clinton. We now have the tools to stop HIV transmission and AIDS deaths, and some of our most affected urban centers like New York City and San Francisco are making dramatic progress towards realistic goals to end their epidemics as early as 2020. Yet our national HIV response has stagnated, with no reduction in the past decade in the 50,000 avoidable new HIV infections each year. Indeed, some regions of our country are losing ground in the fight, with tragically increasing rates of new infections and premature mortality.

We know that your longer-term political record reflects a true commitment to the HIV/AIDS response and

to universal access to affordable health care. The Clinton Foundation has dedicated many resources and played a crucial role in many milestones, including reducing costs of first-line generic HIV drugs globally. In your campaign website's "LGBT initiatives" section, you voice your commitment to affordable HIV treatment and prevention, including new tools like PrEP. And in your 2011 remarks at the National Institutes of Health, you were also the first to publicly set the global goal of an "AIDS-free generation."

As a result of the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid expansion in some states, and new HIV prevention tools, ending the national HIV/AIDS epidemic is truly within our reach. Indeed, a rapidly growing community-driven national coalition, comprised of organizations including Housing Works, Treatment Action Group, GMHC, Latino Commission on AIDS, Human Rights Campaign, ACT UP New York, Southern AIDS Coalition, National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS, NMAC (formerly known as National Minority AIDS Council), San Francisco AIDS Foundation, and AIDS Foundation of Chicago, among others, is already initiating a campaign to end the AIDS epidemic in the United States by the year 2025. To pursue and achieve that goal, we must look first to the efforts and successes of those who have exhibited leadership and vision in pursuing this objective and call upon others to follow that lead.

In June 2014, Governor Andrew Cuomo showed tremendous courage by committing New York State to be the first jurisdiction in the nation and around the globe to end AIDS as an epidemic and announcing a three-point plan to achieve that objective by 2020. In 2015, he appointed a Task Force to develop a Blueprint to carry out that plan. That Ending the Epidemic (ETE) Blueprint now serves as the foundation for budget and policy priorities for reaching the 2020 goal, and its implementation is underway.

Governor Cuomo's bold commitment sparked national and global interest and action. Since 2014, other U.S. jurisdictions, including Washington State, Colorado, and San Francisco, have seized the opportunity to end their local HIV/AIDS epidemics; and similar efforts are underway in Atlanta, Texas, and Massachusetts. By following New York's lead by pushing for expanded HIV testing, early antiretroviral treatment and essential services for people with HIV, as well as access to targeted HIV prevention tools such as PrEP for people at high risk, it is now possible for U.S. localities to launch viable plans to end their HIV/AIDS epidemics.

UNAIDS' ambitious call to end the AIDS epidemic worldwide by the year 2030, too, is a goal that is within our reach, but it's also true that if a well-resourced United States cannot end our epidemic, then we will most certainly lose that global fight.

In his final State of the Union address, President Obama asserted that "we're on track to end the scourge of HIV/AIDS. That's within our grasp." To make that a reality, however, the nation urgently needs a more aggressive federal strategy and framework to support such local plans and a deeper federal commitment to end the national HIV/AIDS epidemic.

We ask for you to prioritize the establishment of strategies to end the U.S. and global HIV/AIDS epidemics as a key component of your campaign platform. To that end, we propose the following:

the appointment of an HIV advisor for your campaign;

a meeting with you and HIV community leadership at your earliest convenience to discuss creating a viable plan to end the national epidemic, one that honors the many Americans we have lost to AIDS, and that recognizes, engages, respects, and supports the many Americans with HIV and those who will become HIV-positive unless we take action—at the rate of 40,000 to 50,000 new annual infections if

current national trends persist;

your announcement of a commitment to end AIDS as an epidemic in the United States by 2025. This commitment would include convening a Community Advisory Panel of community and public health experts and government officials; working with the panel to develop a detailed strategy for a national plan to end the AIDS epidemic by 2025; and developing financial commitments using increased funding to established federal programs; and

support ending the global AIDS pandemic by increasing funding to the global PEPFAR program by at least \$2 billion per year by 2020 to double the number of people on treatment and provide additional funding for an initiative to address the social and economic drivers of HIV, poverty, and inequality.

The good news is that tremendous progress has been made since the 1980s. Indeed, there has never been a more hopeful time or a better window of opportunity in the fight to end AIDS. To achieve that dream, we need a comprehensive national strategy that utilizes and leverages every resource to finally bring this scourge to an end. Creating and implementing that strategy calls for vision, fortitude, and tenacity from you and other leaders. We strongly urge you to join with us NOW to seize this opportunity.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue and we look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Jose Abrigo, Staff Attorney, LGBTQ/HIV Advocacy Project, Queens Legal Services
ACRIA

ACT UP New York

African Services Committee

AIDS Action Baltimore

AIDS Alabama

AIDS Foundation of Chicago

Albany Damien Center

Amida Care

AVAC

Bailey House

John Barry, LMSW, Executive Director, Southern Tier AIDS Program

BOOM! Health

Rebecca Botting

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Reginald T. Brown, M. Ed., Unity Fellowship of Christ Church, VOCAL-NY Community Leader

Central New York HIV Care Network

Coalition for Homeless Youth

JD Davids, TheBody.com

Sharen I. Duke, Executive Director and CEO, AIDS Service Center NYC (ASCNYC)

Sergio Farfan, Louisiana Latino Health Coalition for HIV/AIDS

Ingrid Floyd, Executive Director, Iris House

Miasha Forbes, Human Rights Activist and Founder, Just for Us: Gender Diversity Project

GMHC

Health GAP

Health People

Hispanic Health Network
HIV Prevention Justice Alliance
Housing Works
Brian Hujdich, Pozitively Health Coalition
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Hyacinth AIDS Foundation
Carine Jocelyn, CEO, Diaspora Community Services, Brooklyn, NY
Marsha Jones, the Afiya Center
Howard Josepher, LCSW, President & CEO, Exponents
Jacquelyn Kilmer, CEO, Harlem United
Lambda Independent Democrats of Brooklyn
Latino Commission on AIDS
Latinos in the Deep South
LGBT Bar Association of Greater New York
Matthew McMorrow, former Director of Government Affairs, Empire State Pride Agenda
David Ernesto Munar, CEO, Howard Brown Health
National Black Justice Coalition
National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS
NMAC (formerly known as the National Minority AIDS Council)
OASIS-Latino LGBTs Wellness Center
Chuck Peterson, Executive Director, Clare Housing, Minneapolis, MN
Michael Emanuel Rajner, Wilton Manors, FL
Kyle Rapon, Esq., Director of Survival and Self-Determination, Sylvia Rivera Law Project
Elana Redfield, Attorney and LGBTQI Activist
Dr. Margaret S. Reneau, Director of Programs, National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS
Eric Sawyer, Founding Member—ACT UP, Co-Founder Housing Works, Inc. & Health GAP, Inc.
Virginia Shubert, Shubert Botein Policy Associates
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Daniel W. Tietz, Chief Special Services Officer, NYC Human Resources Administration/Department of Social Services
Treatment Action Group
Trillium Health/Rochester
Peter Twyman, CEO, Keep a Child Alive
Andrew Velez, ACT UP New York
VillageCare
Tom Viola, Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS
VOCAL New York
Washington Heights CORNER Project
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