Commitment to PrEP

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This morning, the US Prevention Task Force for the Affordable Care Act reaffirmed their commitment to HIV PrEP. They looked back over hundreds of studies, particularly new studies for injectables, to again document that HIV PrEP is scientifically safe and effective. While NMAC appreciates this added review, we don't think it will stop a court case on HIV PrEP that is making its way through the Texas. Using the Religious Freedom Act, some Christians are asserting that they should not have to pay for HIV PrEP because it goes against their religious values. If this sounds familiar, it's because the same argument is used by some Christian bakers who do not want to make wedding cakes for same sex couples or some Christian website developers who do not want to create websites for same sex couples.

The result of this court case could be legal discrimination that makes LBGTQ Americans second class citizens. The radical right's strategy is about controlling the courts and using bogus lawsuits to do what can't be accomplished legislatively. HIV PrEP is just a Trojan Horse. Their goal is to use religion to exempt Christians from providing services to homosexuals and to throw the ACA into chaos.

This afternoon, the President will sign The Respect for Marriage Act. This is an amazing and wonderful outcome, but it won't stop the extreme right. Unfortunately, there is a robust exemption for religious organizations in the Act. The bill that guarantees our right to marry also codifies their right to discriminate. It remains a question of freedom and democracy for all Americans. This is not a fight that any sane individual wants to have right now in the middle of multiple epidemics, war, recession, race relations, abortion, don't say Gay, and a world that seems out of control, yet here we are.

Unfortunately, right now, the HIV movement is playing checkers while the extreme right plays 3D chess. We are not ready for the tidal wave that is about to hit us and so many other movements. NMAC's primary commitment is to the HIV movement; however, we believe the HIV community cannot go at it alone. We are too small and have too few voices. Our movement is dependent on government support to provide HIV research, treatment, housing, care, and prevention services. Losing means the degradation of the HIV infrastructure. Ultimately, they could argue via the courts that some Christians should not have to pay for the care or prevention of HIV because it's against their religious beliefs. Can Congress or the Administration stop an activist court? What is the HIV

movement’s role? What is NMAC’s role?

This is my last musing for 2022. I hope you have a wonderful Christmas and New Year. Thank you for your support. It is not OK that certain communities are using HIV PrEP as a Trojan Horse to blow-up the Affordable Care Act and discriminate against the LGBTQ community. I want you to know that NMAC continues to urgently fight for all the communities highly impacted by HIV. In the ’80s and early ’90s, I witnessed too many friends die before they could become the amazing leaders they were supposed to be. We were robbed, and our community will never know how much it lost. Our fight continues in their memory, to make the losses matter, to make sense of the pain and sorrow, and to use their examples to teach the world.

Yours in the Struggle,

Paul Kawata

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