December 14, 2012

Dr. Robert Cosby
c/o USPSTF
540 Gaither Road
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Dr. Cosby:

The HIV Testing Reimbursement Subcommittee of the HIV Health Care Access Working Group, affiliated with the Federal AIDS Policy Partnership, and the undersigned organizations and individuals, praise the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) for strongly recommending that all adolescents and adults from the age of 15 to 65 and pregnant women should be screened for HIV infection. We fully support the grade “A” recommendation and urge you to finalize it as soon as possible. This grade change will help make HIV screening a routine part of preventative care.

Your decision to change the grade for routine testing is supported by scientific evidence and is a critical step in addressing HIV in the United States. There are currently over 1.1 million people living with HIV in the US, but over 200,000 of them are unaware of their infection. Additionally, there continues to be approximately 50,000 new infections each year and more people than ever before are living with the disease.

Using a risk-based testing strategy has proven inadequate because risk can be difficult to determine. Therefore, in order to reduce the number of new infections, we must institute routine HIV testing.

Making sure that all those living with HIV are aware of their infection is critical to both individual and public health outcomes and to ending AIDS in the U.S.

Diagnosing people early and linking them to care and treatment is the best strategy for improving individual health and clinical outcomes. Federal HIV treatment guidelines now recommend that all individuals with HIV be offered HIV treatment upon diagnosis to improve health outcomes and prevent irreparable disease progression. However, nearly 40 percent of people diagnosed with HIV progress to AIDS within one year of diagnosis, meaning that they have carried the virus for many years without detection. Routinizing HIV screening will help change this.

According to recent studies over 50 percent of new infections are attributable to the 20 percent of people who are unaware of their status. Reversing this trend is critical because we know that when an individual is aware that they are HIV positive, they are more likely to take steps to avoid transmitting the virus to others.
Additionally, the groundbreaking study HPTN052 substantiated that HIV treatment can prevent transmission. That is, when someone is diagnosed with HIV, engaged in care, adherent to an antiretroviral regimen, and achieve viral suppression, they are up to 96 percent less likely to transmit HIV. However, in order to realize this benefit, people who are HIV positive must be made aware of their infection through HIV testing and subsequently linked to quality care.

We strongly support the USPSTF Grade “A” recommendation for routine HIV screening for adolescents and adults from age 15 through 65, and pregnant women. This recommendation now more closely aligns with the CDC recommendation and will be instrumental in realizing an end to HIV/AIDS in the United States.

Should you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact Subcommittee Co-Chairs Carl Schmid at cschmid@theaidsinstitute.org or Holly Kilness at holly@aahivm.org. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Organizations (127)

Community Information Center
Dab the AIDS Bear Project
Desert AIDS Project
East Los Angeles Women’s Center
Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation
EMS Resources/HispanicAIDS
Executive Committee of the California STD Directors Association
Fenway Health
GALAEI
Gay Men's Health Crisis
Georgia AIDS Coalition
Haymarket Center
Health Federation of Philadelphia
Health for Life Clinic PLLC
Health Services Center, Inc.
HealthHIV
HIV Dental Alliance
HIV Law Project
HIV Medicine Association
HIV Prevention Justice Alliance
HOPE: Atlanta Programs of Travelers Aid
Housing Works
International Foundation for Alternative Research in AIDS, Inc.
Justice Resource Institute
L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center
Latino Commission on AIDS
LifeLinc of Maryland
Lifelong AIDS Alliance
Los Angeles County HIV Drug & Alcohol Task Force
Louisiana Latino Health Coalition (LLHC)
Lynne Warrick Institute
Medical U. of SC/Lowcountry AIDS Services Consumer Advisory Board
Midwest AIDS Training + Education Center (MATEC)
Mountain Plains AIDS Education and Training Center
Moveable Feast
Multicultural AIDS Coalition
National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors
National Association of People With AIDS (NAPWA)
National Coalition of STD Directors
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association
National Latino AIDS Action Network (NLAAN)
National Minority AIDS Council
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable
Nebraska AIDS Project
New Concepts Community Support Services
New Hearts Encouragement Ministry
Ohio AIDS Coalition, a Division of ARC
Orange County Health Department
Orange County HIV/AIDS Advocacy Team Partnership Project
PeterCares House
Portland Black Pride
Positive Champions Speakers Bureau
POZ VETS USA-INTL
Project Inform
Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Coalition
Rural Women’s Health Project
San Francisco AIDS Foundation
Servicios de La Raza
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S.
START at Westminster
Sunburst Projects
Test Positive Aware Network
The American Academy of HIV Medicine
The Family Tree Community Center
The Women’s Collective
Trans-Latina Coalition
Treatment Access Expansion Project
Treatment Action Group
Trinity Charities, Inc.
UCLA Art & Global Health Center
United Medical Center
Unity Health Care
University of Miami Miller School of Medicine
University of Virginia Health System
Urban Coalition for HIV/AIDS Prevention Services (UCHAPS)
VillageCare
Waterbury Hospital
Weingart Center Association
West Alabama AIDS Outreach

Western North Carolina AIDS Project
Women Organized to Respond to Life-threatening Diseases (WORLD)

Individuals (189)

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Josephine Ayankoya
Margarita Bacigalupo
Danny Bado
Ann Bagchi
Darla Balandran
R.E. Baren
Emily Barr
Jeffrey Basinger
Jeffrey Beal
Mary Berghaus
Jeff Berry
Erin Blakeslee
Thomas Bland
Michael B. Blank, PhD
William Booth
Donna Bridgers
Ryan Buchholz, MD
Tiffani Burke
Maricarmen Cabranes
Nicole Caputo
Anne Cavett
Leslie Christian
Patricia Clark
Jay Conner
Rev. Stephen Copley
Tyler Cornell
Gloria Crowell
Terry Cushman
Latisha Davis
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