

June 28, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

Thank you for your support in defending federal and local Washington DC funds for syringe exchange programs. Protecting these programs will ensure that people and communities at risk for HIV and viral hepatitis will continue to have access to critical, evidence-based prevention tools. We appreciate that syringe exchange remained an important issue for you in the Fiscal Year 2011 appropriations negotiations with Senate and House Congressional leaders and we are grateful for your success. We hope to count on you again to defend access to funding for syringe exchange programs at both federal and local Washington DC levels and thus help ensure continued progress in helping to prevent new infections of hepatitis C and HIV.

Maintaining the flexibility to allow federally and locally funded syringe exchange is vitally important for accomplishing the goals of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy and the HHS Viral Hepatitis Action Plan. Despite significant progress in reducing rates of new infections, each year an estimated 8,000 Americans contract HIV and an estimated 12,000 Americans contract the hepatitis C virus directly or indirectly from sharing contaminated syringes. It is truly important to maintain the current law which allows for the use of federal funding for syringe exchange with the consent of local health and law enforcement authorities for particular sites. Nearly 1/3 of all reported AIDS cases since the beginning of the U.S. epidemic have been attributed, either directly or indirectly, to injection drug use. Moreover, shared syringes and drug injection equipment are the leading cause of new hepatitis C infections. Syringe access is urgently needed to stem a wave of hepatitis C infections among a new generation of injection drug users reported in several states.

We additionally support the critically important ability of Washington DC to maintain local funding for syringe exchange. Washington, DC has one of the highest HIV/AIDS rates in the country, with an estimated 1 in 20 DC residents infected with HIV and 1 in 50 living with AIDS. Injection drug use is the third most common mode of HIV transmission among people in the District and currently accounts for an astonishing 26% of new infections among women in the city.

Syringe exchange programs not only decrease transmission of HIV and hepatitis C, but also increase HIV and hepatitis C testing, entry into drug treatment programs, and safe disposal of used syringes. We thank you again and ask for your continued support of funding for syringe exchange by fighting any future efforts to reinstate the ban on funding of syringe exchange programs at the federal or local Washington DC level during negotiations for Fiscal Year 2012.

We greatly appreciate your support and leadership on this issue and we look forward to working with you and your staff in the future.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth, Washington, DC
AIDS Action Baltimore, Baltimore, MD
AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts, Boston, MA
Aids Alliance for Children Youth and Families, Washington, DC
AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Chicago, IL
AIDS United, Washington, DC
Alaskan AIDS Assistance Association, Anchorage, AK
American Civil Liberties Union, New York, NY
Any Positive Change Inc., Lower Lake, CA
Association of Nurses in AIDS Care, Akron, OH
Atlanta Harm Reduction Coalition, Atlanta, GA
AVAC: Global Advocacy for HIV Prevention, New York, NY
Berkeley Needle Exchange Emergency Distribution (NEED), Berkeley, CA
Bethany Place, Belleville, IL
Bienestar Human Services, Los Angeles, CA
Caring Ambassadors Program, Inc., Oregon City, OR
Casa Joven del Caribe, Inc., Dorado, PR
Center for HIV Law and Policy, New York, NY
CHAIN (Community HIV Hepatitis Advocates of Iowa Network), Des Moines, IA
Champaign Urbana Public Health District, Champaign, IL
Chicago Recovery Alliance, Chicago, IL
CitiWide Harm Reduction, Bronx, NY
Clean Needles Now, Los Angeles, CA
Community Access National Network, Washington, DC
Community Health Empowerment, Richmond, VA
Community Outreach Intervention Projects, University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health, Chicago, IL
DC Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, Washington, DC
Drug Policy Alliance, New York, NY
Family and Medical Counseling Service, Inc. (FMCS), Washington, DC
Family Equality Council, St. Paul, MN
Fresno Needle Exchange Program, Fresno, CA
Gay Men's Health Crisis, New York, NY
Georgia AIDS Coalition, Snellville, GA
Harlem United Community AIDS Center, Inc., New York, NY
Harm Reduction Coalition, New York, NY
Harm Reduction Services, Sacramento, CA
HealthHIV, Washington, DC
Healthy Rhythm Consulting & Community Art Gallery, Fairfield, TX
Hep C Connection, Denver, CO
Hepatitis Education Project, Seattle, WA

HIV Education and Prevention Project of Alameda County, Oakland, CA
HIV Medicine Association, Arlington, VA
HIV Prevention Justice Alliance (HIV PJA), Chicago, IL
Human Rights Campaign, Washington, DC
Hyacinth AIDS Foundation, New Brunswick, NJ
Interior AIDS Association, Fairbanks, AK
Lambda Legal, New York, NY
Legacy Community Health Services, Inc., Houston, TX
Legal Action Center, Washington, DC
Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center, Los Angeles, CA
Lower East Side Harm Reduction Center, New York, NY
Minnesota AIDS Project, Minneapolis, MN
Missouri Hepatitis C Alliance, Columbia, MO
Nashville CARES, Nashville, TN
National Alliance for HIV Education and Workforce Development, Washington, DC
National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors, Washington, DC
National Association of County and City Health Officials, Washington, DC
National Association of People with AIDS, Silver Spring, MD
National Coalition for LGBT Health, Washington, DC
National Coalition of STD Directors, Washington, DC
National Latino AIDS Action Network (NLAAN), Washington, DC
National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC), Washington, DC
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable, Rohnert Park, CA
Needle Exchange Program of Asheville, Asheville, NC
New York Harm Reduction Educators (NYHRE), Bronx, NY
North American Syringe Exchange Network (NASEN), Tacoma, WA
North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition, Durham, NC
Northern Exchange Syringe Exchange Program, Fairbanks, AK
Open Society Policy Center, Washington, DC
Phoenix Center, Springfield, IL
Project Inform, San Francisco, CA
Roxbury Comprehensive Community Health Center, Roxbury, MA
S.H.a R.I. (Springfield Harm Reduction Initiative), Springfield, IL
Safe Horizon, New York, NY
San Francisco AIDS Foundation, San Francisco, CA
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the US (SIECUS), Washington, DC
Sisters and Brothers Helping Each Other, Kankakee, IL
SLO Bangers Syringe Exchange Program, San Luis Obispo, CA
South Jersey AIDS Alliance, Atlantic City, NJ
St. Ann's Corner of Harm Reduction, Bronx, NY
START at Westminster, Washington, DC
Status C Unknown, Medford, NY
Tapestry Health, Florence, MA
Tarzana Treatments Centers, Tarzana, CA

Test Positive Aware Network (TPAN), Chicago, IL
The AIDS Institute, Washington, DC
The American Foundation for AIDS Research, Washington, DC
The Greater Washington Viral Hepatitis Support Group, Silver Spring, MD
The Living & Affected Corporation, Little Rock, AK
Total Health Awareness Team, Rockford, IL
Treatment Action Group (TAG), New York, NY
Trust for America's Health, Washington, DC
U.S. Positive Women's Network (PWN), Oakland, CA
UIC School of Public Health, Chicago, IL
UNID@S, The National Latin@ LGBT Human Rights Organization, Washington, DC
Urban Coalition for HIV/AIDS Prevention Services (UCHAPS), Washington, DC
VillageCare, New York, NY
Voices Of Community Activists & Leaders (VOCAL-NY), New York, NY
Washington AIDS Partnership, Washington, DC
Washington Heights CORNER Project, New York, NY
Windham Harm Reduction Coalition Inc., Willimantic, CT
WORLD (Women Organized to Respond to Life-threatening Diseases), Oakland, CA
YWEP- Young Women's Empowerment Project, Chicago, IL