



PRESS RELEASE

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Harlem United's Statement on Revised CDC HIV Incidence Data: *Now What?*

Mexico City, Mexico—The CDC's revised estimate that 56,300 new HIV infections occurred in the United States in 2006 is shocking, but we are surprised it is not worse. The CDC's data highlights America's lack of commitment to stopping the domestic AIDS epidemic, demonstrated by the ban on federal funding of syringe exchange, and the dramatic increase in funding of failed, abstinence-only programs. More significantly, this lack of commitment is evidenced by the ongoing decline in HIV prevention funding that impacts us throughout the United States and in Harlem.

The revised estimate tells a clear story. There are more HIV infections than we thought. Too many people who are infected with HIV are unaware of their status. HIV prevention resources are declining and, in many cases, severely underfunded. What are the solutions? Harlem United believes a dramatic increase in prevention resources are needed to address the true scope of the epidemic. We need a comprehensive and coordinated national and local strategy that targets prevention funding to HIV testing and access to treatment, using science-based, proven interventions.

Recent studies demonstrate that the HIV epidemic is primarily driven by HIV positive individuals who are unaware of their status. We know that when people are aware of their status they are more likely to protect themselves and their partners. When in treatment, they are also less infectious.

In New York State, we continue to be hampered by antiquated HIV testing legislation, created in the early 1990s to discourage HIV testing because we did not have the level of treatment and care available today. We need legislation that routinizes HIV testing in a manner that will reach individuals who unknowingly feed the HIV epidemic. HIV testing must be targeted utilizing geographic approaches in high incidence areas in order to reach communities of color and gay men of color which the CDC has identified as the groups most impacted by the AIDS epidemic. It is imperative that routine HIV testing in community-based and emergency room settings becomes that national standard to identify people who are unaware of their status.

While Harlem United supports the community's call for a National AIDS Strategy, the urgent need is to increase resources, identify those who are unaware of their HIV status and get them into treatment, and dismantle the faulty prevention policies of the last eight years which have done nothing to address the root causes of the HIV epidemic among communities of color and gay men in the United States and its territories.

Harlem United is a community-based organization offering comprehensive care—in a healthy and healing environment—to people suffering from or at risk of HIV/AIDS.

For more information about Harlem United, please visit our website at www.harlemunited.org

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