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NAPWA Applauds the Release of the National AIDS Strategy New Resources will be Necessary to Make this Strategy a Success

July 13, 2010 - Washington, DC – The National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA) applauds the release of the nation's first strategy to address the domestic HIV epidemic. Overall, the plan is thoughtful and lays down some meaningful and aggressive goals to reduce the number of new infections and improve access to care for persons living with HIV. President Obama, as part of his campaign for President, promised the nation that he would develop such a strategy; NAPWA thanks the President for fulfilling this important commitment.

Frank Oldham, President and CEO of NAPWA stated "On behalf of the 1.2 million people living with HIV in the United States, I wish to thank the President and Jeff Crowley for releasing this long awaited document. NAPWA promises to work with the Administration and Congress to ensure that this becomes a living breathing document that has a meaningful and fruitful impact on the lives of people living with HIV."

Overall, the strategy has three basic goals, which NAPWA wishes to comment on:

- (1) Reducing new HIV infections, with a particular focus on communities where HIV is concentrated. The Administration's goal of reducing new infections by 25% is an important goal that we must all work together to ensure is not only met, but exceeded.
- (2) Increasing access to care and improving health outcomes for people living with HIV. NAPWA particularly applauds the goals of establishing a seamless system of care for people when they are diagnosed with HIV, increasing the number of HIV clinical care providers, and addressing the complex co-morbid conditions of many individuals living with HIV, including issues such as access to housing. In light of the current AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) crisis, with over 2,200 individuals on waiting lists for HIV medications, it is very apparent that this goal will only be met with the significant introduction of new federal resources to meet the growing demand for HIV services. The Administration and Congress must step up to the plate to provide new federal funding not only to address to the ADAP crisis, but also to help meet the goals laid out in this important plan.
- (3) Reducing HIV-related health disparities, including recognizing the role that stigma continues to play in reducing access to care and getting people tested. We at NAPWA recognize on a very person level the major and ongoing role that stigma continues to play in the everyday lives of people living with HIV, including promoting fear, inhibiting disclosure, and reducing persons access to the HIV care they need and deserve. In order to effectively address the HIV epidemic, reducing stigma must play a major role in any strategy.

Stated Matthew Lesieur, Director of Public Policy, "The release of the nation's first National AIDS Strategy is only the beginning. Now the long road ahead lies in making this strategy a reality that has value to the average person living with HIV. "

Founded in 1983, NAPWA is the first coalition of people living with HIV/AIDS in the world as well as the oldest AIDS organization in the United States. NAPWA is the trusted, independent voice of the more than one million people living with HIV/AIDS in America.

For more information, visit <http://www.napwa.org>.

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