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## President Obama Introduces New National HIV/AIDS Strategy

Washington, DC – Today, President Obama announced a new national strategy to combat America’s rampant HIV/AIDS epidemic. The National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS) is a response to statistics that show that, despite a decrease in the numbers of AIDS deaths, the number of people living with HIV is growing. The strategy emphasizes three chief goals: reducing HIV incidence, increasing access to care, and reducing HIV-related health disparities.

Using the new strategy, the administration plans to redirect funding to populations at greatest risk, and to work to reduce the annual number of new HIV infections by 25 percent within five years by promoting prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. The administration also places an emphasis on reducing the stigma associated with HIV, and strengthening the enforcement of laws that protect people diagnosed with HIV. The strategy is based on a 15-month community engagement project undertaken by the Office of National AIDS Policy (ONAP), which involved community discussions, online engagement, and expert meetings.

“This is a promising move forward, and we are grateful to President Obama and his administration, particularly those in the Office of National AIDS Policy, for implementing such a crucial new initiative,” said Joseph DiNorcia, Jr., President and CEO of the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS). “We are also pleased to see a preliminary mention of, and commitment to, evidence-based sex education as an integral part of HIV prevention, and we hope to continue to work with the administration to achieve this goal.”

However, the strategy does not propose a significant increase in the funding that is currently being allocated for domestic HIV prevention programs, creating significant challenges to achievement of the strategy. Instead, the White House plans to more efficiently redirect funds to target high-risk populations, including African-Americans and gay and bisexual men, as well as redistributing resources to states with the “highest burden of disease.” According to recent data from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 10-15% of youth are not learning about HIV/AIDS in school, and over half of HIV-infected adolescents do not know their infection status. However, teens and young adults are still not listed among the beneficiaries of the resources that will be reallocated by the NHAS, even though a quarter of new infections are occurring in young people between the ages of 13-29.

“The intent behind the strategy, in its attempt to more efficiently target and deploy resources, is a good one,” DiNorcia continued. “However, it’s also clear that more spending for prevention and treatment will be necessary for this program to succeed. The issue is not just that funding is being misallocated;

it's that the money isn't there to begin with. We call on appropriators in Congress to begin implementation of the strategy by shifting resources to meet the priorities of this new strategy.”

SIECUS looks forward to remaining engaged with the administration, as well as the CDC and the broader HIV/AIDS and sex education communities across the country, to ensure that implementation of the NHAS is a transparent and far-reaching process, which appropriately incorporates the need for all school-age children to receive comprehensive sexuality education to effectively stem the tide of new infections among young people.