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Amida Care Joins NYS HIV/AIDS Legislative Awareness Day in Albany

Hundreds of New Yorkers Call on Elected Officials for Additional “End the AIDS Epidemic” Funding for a Healthier New York

Albany, NY (March 9, 2016)—On March 9, Amida Care joined hundreds of other New Yorkers in the HIV/AIDS community in Albany to urge support among New York State elected officials to fund the Blueprint to End the AIDS Epidemic (EtE) in New York State by the year 2020. This action was organized by the End AIDS NY 2020 Community Coalition, made up of over 90 HIV, LGBT, and health care organizations. As a member of the End AIDS NY 2020 Community Coalition, Amida Care united with our members and health care consumers, other EtE Task Force leaders, and HIV and community-based providers in calling on the NYS Senate and Assembly to vote to fully fund implementation of the EtE Blueprint, which Governor Andrew Cuomo publicly pledged to do on World AIDS Day.

\$70 million in EtE investments must be made this year to achieve EtE targets, including \$20 million in new EtE funding for the NYS Department of Health AIDS Institute for 2016-17; \$33 million in first-year costs for the state’s share of HASA expansion for people living with HIV in NYC who are income-eligible; and a \$17 million investment to the NYS Office of Temporary Disability Assistance to expand rental assistance to 6,000 homeless and unstably housed people living with HIV outside of NYC. Those funds would ensure that the socioeconomic drivers of the AIDS epidemic are addressed, including expanding housing, transportation, food, and other essential services for the most vulnerable New Yorkers living with HIV in all parts of the state, as well as treatment and prevention strategies to reach those most at risk.

“Amida Care calls on elected officials to add funding for housing and health care programs for people living with HIV/AIDS,” said Doug Wirth, President and CEO of Amida Care, who served on the Governor’s EtE Task Force. “Amida Care knows firsthand how eliminating barriers to care, such as food insecurity and unstable housing, creates better connections to primary and behavioral health care, which in turn leads to life-saving health outcomes and significant cost savings. Housing is health care – a key component of every individual’s plan for a healthier life and a public health cornerstone for achieving undetectable viral loads that contributes to community health.”

NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio proposed \$26.2 million in his preliminary budget to expand HASA services and rental assistance to 7,300 New Yorkers as part of New York City's commitment to EtE. Expanding housing to HIV positive New Yorkers who do not have an AIDS diagnosis is a key part of the EtE Blueprint. Numerous studies have shown that housing status is among the strongest indicators in HIV health outcomes and service utilization.

In addition to EtE funding, the EtE Coalition and Amida Care are also seeking to advance the Campaign 4 NY/NY Housing, calling on Governor Cuomo to fulfill his commitment to funding 20,000 supportive housing units in New York State, which would be in addition to Mayor de Blasio's 15,000 in NYC. \$60-75 million is also needed for #15andFunding Campaign, to ensure the inclusion of human service workers in minimum wage increases and to fund this increase by amending payment rates to non-profits, local governments, and Medicaid. Legislative priorities include reducing barriers to sterile syringe access by legalizing syringe possession and adding Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA) to the existing Human Rights Law in New York State.

By first announcing a historic plan to End AIDS and organizing a Task Force to develop a Blueprint to End the Epidemic, and then accepting the EtE Blueprint to reduce the number of new HIV infections from 3,000 per year to 750 or fewer by 2020, Governor Cuomo has declared EtE to be a top priority. Achieving the EtE goals has been projected to generate \$4.5 billion in total health care savings, including \$3.8 billion in public sector health spending.

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