



*For Immediate Release*

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**Amida Care Applauds NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio's Budget to Expand HASA**

*Calls on NYS Governor Andrew Cuomo for  
Additional 'End the AIDS Epidemic' Funding for a Healthier New York*

New York, NY (February 1, 2016)—Amida Care applauds Mayor Bill de Blasio's proposal of \$26.2 million in his preliminary budget to expand HASA services and rental assistance to 7,300 New Yorkers as part of the city's commitment to Ending the AIDS Epidemic (EtE) and expanding on its share to fund HASA for All. Amida Care asks Governor Andrew Cuomo to match the city's commitment by allocating \$33 million in state funding, plus \$17 million for statewide access. 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.

“Amida Care calls on Governor Cuomo to add funding for housing and health care programs for people living with HIV/AIDS in his 21-day budget amendments,” 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.”

By first announcing a historic plan to End AIDS and organizing a Task Force to develop a Blueprint to End the Epidemic, Governor Cuomo has demonstrated visionary stewardship and pragmatic leadership. By accepting the EtE Blueprint to reduce the number of new HIV infections from 3,000 per year to fewer than 750 by 2020, Governor Cuomo has declared EtE to be a top priority.

Amida Care joins with our members and health care consumers, other EtE Task Force leaders, and HIV and community-based providers in calling on Governor Cuomo to fully fund implementation of the Blueprint, as he publicly pledged on World AIDS Day. Those funds would ensure that we address the socioeconomic drivers of the epidemic, including expanding housing, transportation, 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. The current state budget proposal includes \$10 million per year in new funding, but much more is required to truly end the epidemic. We ask Governor Cuomo to increase this allocation by \$10 million per year, in addition to meeting the state's share of HASA for All.

Amida Care supports Governor Cuomo's inclusion of several key EtE Blueprint initiatives in his Executive Budget policy proposals that will improve HIV care and testing opportunities for all New Yorkers while also maximizing viral suppression. These include reauthorizing HIV special needs health plans (SNPs); raising the upper age on current HIV testing guidelines to beyond 64; broadening HIV testing and treatment consent laws so that minors can not only consent to testing but HIV treatment and prevention options; and removing limitations on the Expanded Syringe Access Program. We strongly recommend that these proposals be included in the amended Article VII legislation, along with the following proposals: further improve HIV surveillance; amend the HIV testing law to provide truly routine, opt-out testing; and mandate age-appropriate, comprehensive sexual health education in New York State public schools.

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**Amida Care Inc.** is a not-for-profit health plan that specializes in providing comprehensive health coverage and coordinated care to New Yorkers with chronic conditions, including HIV and behavioral health disorders. Through our wide network of top health care providers in the five boroughs of New York City, we serve Medicaid recipients who are living with HIV/AIDS or who are homeless (regardless of HIV status), as well as Medicare recipients with HIV/AIDS and/or chronic conditions. For more information, visit [www.amidacareny.org](http://www.amidacareny.org).