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Amida Care and Latino Commission on AIDS Kick-Off National Latino AIDS Awareness Day at City Hall

New York, NY (October 14, 2015) – Amida Care, New York’s largest Special Needs Health Plan, joined the Latino Commission on AIDS and other community partners today at City Hall to raise awareness of HIV prevention among Latinos in the U.S. and kick-off activities for National Latino AIDS Awareness Day October 15. This year’s theme, “You and I Will Defeat AIDS/ Tú y Yo Derrotaremos al SIDA,” encourages Latino communities to take action by knowing the facts about HIV, getting tested for HIV, and initiating and maintaining medical care if HIV positive.

“National Latino AIDS Awareness Day is about participation and inclusion in health services for a healthier nation,” says Amida Care President and CEO Doug Wirth. “We cannot end AIDS in the U.S. without engaging the Latino community and providing culturally competent health care services.”

Latinos are one of the groups most heavily impacted by HIV in the U.S., accounting for 24.3% of new HIV infections. More than 1.1 million people are living with HIV in the U.S., and about 50,000 people become infected each year. An estimated 1 in 36 Latino men and 1 in 106 Latina women will be diagnosed with HIV in their lifetime. Latinos are disproportionately affected by HIV: while representing 16% of the U.S. population, Latinos account for 19% of people living with HIV.

“We recognize the commitment and leadership of Governor Andrew Cuomo and Mayor Bill De Blasio to address the impact of HIV and AIDS in New York,” said Guillermo Chacon, President of the Latino Commission on AIDS. “The Latino Commission is extremely concerned with the increase of HIV cases among Latino gay men. We must do more at all levels to address this difficult challenge.”

A number of challenges contribute to this burden of HIV in Latino communities, including limited access to health care, language or cultural barriers in health care settings, stigma, discrimination, and in some cases, poverty and addiction. Latinos most at risk for HIV include gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men; women, including transgender women; and young people ages 13-29. At this year’s rally, dialogue will be opened about ways to reduce cultural barriers and stigma surrounding HIV.

Expanding HIV testing to identify those unaware of their HIV status and linking and retaining individuals to care to help them become virally suppressed are essential. In addition, providing access to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV-negative people at greater risk of infection can help prevent individuals from becoming infected. These tools may be facilitated by community health centers, which are often bilingual, to connect people with services.

“Addressing the impact of HIV and AIDS in the Latino/Hispanic communities requires a commitment to act,” said Tony Ochoa, Program Manager of National Latino AIDS Awareness Day. “Raising awareness gives me hope to achieve an AIDS-free generation.”

Amida Care, the largest Medicaid special-needs health plan in New York State, specializes in providing comprehensive health coverage and coordinated care to Medicaid and Medicare members with chronic conditions, including HIV and behavioral health disorders. 35% of Amida Care's members are Latino. By working closely with members to address their health care needs, Amida Care has generated many impressive health outcomes that save lives and money and align with the goals to end the AIDS epidemic:

- Over 93% member engagement in care
- A 93% success rate in getting members on anti-retroviral medications
- A 70% viral load suppression rate among our members

Leading to:

- A 74% decrease in hospital admissions/readmissions
- A 35% reduction in overall medical expenses

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