



*For Immediate Release*

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## **NYS Governor Andrew Cuomo Releases Blueprint to End AIDS Epidemic in New York by 2020**

New York, NY (April 29, 2015) - Today, **Governor Andrew M. Cuomo** affirmed his pledge to End the AIDS epidemic in New York State by 2020 with the release of a groundbreaking Blueprint advanced by the Ending the Epidemic (EtE) Task Force. The plan envisions reducing the rate of annual HIV infections in the state from over 3,000 per year to fewer than 750. The Blueprint will leverage the resources and commitment of New York as a national model for ending the epidemic.

As members of the Task Force, Amida Care, several board members, and numerous network providers laud Governor Cuomo for his vision and celebrate the launch of the Blueprint. The Governor made the announcement at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center in Manhattan.

The Ending the Epidemic Task Force was commissioned by Governor Cuomo and the New York State Department of Health and consists of over 60 activists, health service providers, researchers, public health professionals, and people living with HIV/AIDS. The Task Force worked to develop a set of key recommendations after considering hundreds of proposals gathered from public and community input.

**Charles King, President and CEO of Housing Works and Co-Chair of the Task Force**, asserted that “we have the will and determination to end the epidemic by 2020. Implementing Governor Cuomo’s Blueprint and building up prevention, care, and treatment services will empower HIV-positive New Yorkers to achieve and maintain undetectable viral loads.”

**Paul Vitale, CEO of Brightpoint Health and Chair of Amida Care’s Board of Directors**, said, “Integration of care will be critical to the Blueprint’s success. A key component will be the expansion of consumer workforce development programs that galvanize a network of peers to connect people to care and improve retention.”

“Accountability and excellence of health plans and the Medicaid managed sector are imperative parts of meeting the established Blueprint’s goals and guaranteeing that people living with HIV have access to vital care and lifesaving medications. Expanding HIV quality metrics ensures that health plans have a pivotal role in ending the epidemic,” said **Doug Wirth, President and CEO of Amida Care and a member of the Task Force**.

The Blueprint’s proposals call for expanding HIV testing, improving retention in care and viral suppression programs, and expanding access to prevention treatments like PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis) and PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis). However, “reaching people who are not in care or most at risk of infection in their communities will require, in some cases, enhanced outreach efforts and, once they are engaged, a variety of adherence supports so that they too can achieve optimal health,” said **Dr. Jerome Ernst, Chief Medical Officer at Amida Care**. “For many individuals, successful treatment involves more than just taking medication.”

Full implementation of the plan will call for expanded access to affordable and stable housing, secure food, transportation, and employment opportunities, as well as providing youth with education, prevention and treatment outreach services, expanding health care and human rights for transgender New Yorkers and eliminating barriers to clean syringe and condom use. All of these initiatives would address the social determinants of health (unstable housing, unemployment, stigma, discrimination, economic and food insecurity, etc.) that disproportionately drive new HIV infection rates in underserved communities.

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*Amida Care Inc. is a not-for-profit health care organization that specializes in providing comprehensive health coverage, medical, behavioral, and wellness services, and coordinated care to New Yorkers with chronic conditions. Through our wide network of top health care providers in the five boroughs of New York City, Amida Care delivers a special-needs health plan (SNP) to Medicaid recipients who are living with HIV/AIDS or are homeless and HIV-positive or negative, as well as Medicare recipients with HIV/AIDS and/or chronic conditions. The largest SNP in New York State, Amida Care was founded by six community-based sponsor organizations—Acacia Network, Brightpoint Health, Harlem United, Housing Works, St. Mary’s Center, and Village Care. Our newest sponsor organization is Community Healthcare Network. Through a variety of member engagement activities, we solicit feedback on the quality of care and ensure that our members’ needs are being met. Plans are under way to expand into Westchester County in 2015 and parts of Long Island in 2016. More information about Amida Care is available at [www.amidacareny.org](http://www.amidacareny.org).*

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