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Amida Care Celebrates 20 Years of Improving Health Outcomes for New Yorkers Impacted by HIV

–New York's largest Medicaid Special Needs Health Plan was launched by seven community-based healthcare providers in August 2003–

–Amida Care currently serves over 9,000 New Yorkers affected by HIV, including 2,800 members who identify as transgender, gender nonconforming, and non-binary–

–Amida Care is the expert in HIV and gender-affirming care–

New York, NY (August 7, 2023) - This month, Amida Care, a not-for-profit health plan specializing in providing comprehensive health coverage and coordinated care to people affected by HIV, celebrates 20 years of serving New Yorkers. The visionary plan was formed in August 2003 by community-based HIV service providers and has grown into New York's largest Medicaid managed care Special Needs Health Plan (SNP). Since its founding, Amida Care has taken a unique and innovative approach, thinking outside the box to put the needs of its members above all else, working in partnership with the providers who serve them, and playing an instrumental role in efforts to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

"Two decades ago, no one believed that seven community-based healthcare organizations with no experience with Medicaid managed care could launch a health plan. But thanks to the vision of our provider founders, we have been able to help thousands of New Yorkers live healthy, fulfilling lives by creating an innovative model of care that puts the needs of people impacted by HIV first," said Doug Wirth, President and CEO of Amida Care.

Amida Care has had tremendous success improving health outcomes for its members. Results include:

- achieving viral suppression for 80 percent of members living with HIV, an increase from 60 percent in the early 2000s;
- curing over 1,200 members of Hepatitis C, a leading cause of death among people living with HIV; and
- helping over 60 percent of transgender, gender nonconforming, and non-binary (TGNCNB) members access gender-affirming care, including surgeries, within three years of membership.

Amida Care takes a member-centered approach, working closely with providers to ensure members get the individualized attention and support they need. Members are surrounded by an integrated care team of providers, social workers, health navigators, consumer workers with lived experience around HIV care and prevention, care coordinators, behavioral health specialists, nurses, pharmacists, and others who work together to address the needs of the whole person. This forges a true partnership, with the health plan functioning as a bridge between providers and members.

Today, Amida Care serves over 9,000 New Yorkers. Of these members:

- 2,800 identify as TGNCNB;
- 40 percent have experienced homelessness at least once since their HIV diagnosis;
- 90 percent have a history of substance abuse;
- Two-thirds are living with significant mental health issues including traumas;
- 55 percent are Black and 32 percent are Hispanic/Latinx – highlighting the disproportionate impact the HIV epidemic continues to have on communities of color.

Originally known as VidaCare, Amida Care was founded in 2003 by seven community-based HIV/AIDS providers who deeply understood the needs of the communities they served. These providers came together to create a health plan to meet people where they are. With input from the people they serve, they designed a health insurance plan to meet the needs of New Yorkers living with HIV by focusing on the coordination of health care and social services, creating a model of care that is impacting the way health care is managed and provided in New York City to this day. Amida Care's sponsor provider organizations--Acacia Network, Community Healthcare Network, Harlem United, Housing Works, St. Mary's Center at Argus Community, Sun River Health, and Village Care--continue to guide the organization and provide specialized health services to care for its members.

Amida Care actively involves members in a structured way to seek their feedback and perspectives. The plan's groundbreaking Member Advisory Council is a group of members who provide input to help improve the plan's services. Three representatives from the Member Advisory Council are elected to sit on Amida Care's Board of Directors, highlighting members' voices in their health plan and underscoring a commitment to empowering the communities Amida Care serves.

Since its founding, Amida Care has advocated to ensure that communities most impacted by HIV have access to care and that the providers serving these communities have the necessary resources to deliver that care. Amida Care's advocacy efforts and thought leadership has consistently created real policy change. It was one of the first organizations to advocate for early Hepatitis-C coverage and treatment, which is now a covered benefit for all Medicaid recipients.

Similarly, Amida Care was one of the first to advocate for gender-affirming care, including hormone therapy and surgeries, and in 2017, the organization's advocacy efforts expanded SNP eligibility for people of TGNCNB experience, regardless of HIV status. Amida Care has developed an impressive model of care to ensure TGNCNB members receive the best comprehensive, gender-affirming care possible to support them in living healthy, authentic lives. In addition to primary care, gender-affirming procedures, and mental health supports, Amida Care provides access to sexual health services, including pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) to support its HIV-negative members in remaining HIV-negative, and contributing to the goal to end the HIV epidemic.

"Over twenty years, we have grown and evolved, but our commitment to addressing health disparities, ending HIV, breaking down barriers to care for marginalized communities, and addressing racism as a public health crisis remains steadfast. As we take a moment to celebrate all we've accomplished, we thank the leaders at the New York State AIDS Institute, Medicaid and Office of Health Insurance Programs for their vision and commitment that created the SNP HIV-experienced model of care, and we look forward to continuing to serve communities impacted by HIV," Wirth added.

Amida Care Inc. is a not-for-profit health plan that specializes in providing comprehensive health coverage and coordinated care to New Yorkers with complex conditions, including HIV and behavioral health disorders, and people who are of transgender experience or who are homeless (regardless of HIV status). Amida Care has a wide network of health care providers throughout New York City and is the largest Medicaid Special Needs Health Plan (SNP) in New York State. For more information, visit www.amidacareny.org.

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