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Amida Care and End AIDS NY 2020 Community Coalition Urge New York State to Expand HIV Special Needs Health Plan Eligibility to All Medicaid-Eligible Men Who Have Sex with Men Regardless of HIV Status

- *Expansion would grant eligibility to approximately 100,000 MSM in New York State* -

- *View the full letter [here](#)* -

New York, NY – July 16, 2018: [Amida Care](#), New York’s largest not-for-profit Medicaid Special Needs Health Plan (SNP), along with the End AIDS NY 2020 Community Coalition, sent a [letter](#) to New York State Medicaid Director Donna Frescatore and New York State AIDS Institute Director Johanne E. Morne urging the state to allow HIV Special Needs Health Plans (HSNPs) to provide services to all men who have sex with men (MSM) who qualify for Medicaid, regardless of HIV status. This is a crucial step in the effort to End the AIDS Epidemic in New York State by the year 2020.

“The HIV epidemic among gay and bisexual men of color in the United States is nothing less than a crisis, and it demonstrates the urgent need for access to high-quality health care for the LGBTQ community and communities of color in New York and throughout the nation,” said Doug Wirth, President and CEO of Amida Care. “We are committed to working to ensure that black and Latino gay and bisexual New Yorkers are no longer disproportionately impacted by HIV, and this expansion will help us reach our goal of Ending the Epidemic.”

In New York City, a staggering 92% of new HIV diagnoses among men are in gay and bisexual men, and 36% of those new diagnoses are among black and Latino men. Furthermore, the HIV diagnosis rate among black males was 3 times higher than the rate among white males. The CDC predicts that 1 in 2 black gay and bisexual men and a quarter of Latino gay and bisexual men will become HIV positive in their lifetime, compared to 1 in 2,500 heterosexual white men. Even though the epidemic is hitting black and Latino MSM hardest, the largest proportion of New York State Medicaid recipients taking pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to prevent HIV--37%--are white MSM. HIV negative black and Latino MSM must have better access to HIV prevention tools like PrEP. Common reasons for being unable to access PrEP include being unable to get a doctor appointment and problems with insurance coverage.

HSNPs already provide comprehensive PrEP and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) programs to support the HIV negative transgender and homeless populations they currently serve. These services will help to significantly reduce new HIV infections in the MSM population. The comprehensive care coordination services that HSNPs are equipped to provide, such as HIV prevention education and treatment adherence assistance, will help HIV negative MSM Medicaid recipients get and stay healthier and result in long-term medical cost savings by preventing new HIV infections.

New York, once the epicenter of the AIDS epidemic, has made great strides to end HIV/AIDS as an

epidemic. Since the Blueprint to End the HIV/AIDS Epidemic was launched, the number of new HIV infections has dropped dramatically from 2,497 in 2014 to 2,115 in 2016, the latest year for which data is available. While this improvement is encouraging, increased investment is needed in communities most impacted by HIV/AIDS including MSM of color. The letter, dated July 12, 2018, stated: “Providing HIV negative MSM Medicaid recipients with access to HSNP services will help New York State meet its End the Epidemic (ETE) goal of reducing new HIV infections to below 750 per year by the end of 2020. The increased eligibility will address recommendations of the 2015 Blueprint to End the AIDS Epidemic by providing access to culturally competent care for this population at high risk for HIV acquisition.”

About Amida Care

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, 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.