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Amida Care Condemns Discriminatory “Deploy or Get Out” Policy for People Living with HIV, Urges Immediate Action

New York, NY (July 27, 2018) – Doug Wirth, President and CEO of Amida Care, New York’s largest not-for-profit Medicaid Special Needs Health Plan for New Yorkers living with chronic conditions, including HIV, issued the following statement in response to the Trump Administration’s so-called “Deploy or Get Out” policy, which would effectively bar people living with HIV from serving in the military if implemented on October 1:

“Building on decades of stigma and discrimination that service members living with HIV have endured, the Trump Administration’s ‘Deploy or Get Out’ policy is a thinly veiled attempt to purge the military of the 1,000+ service members who live with HIV and serve this country with dignity.

We join our allies in calling for the immediate halt to this bigoted policy. Individuals living with HIV have faced unwarranted and discriminatory barriers for too long. This policy, just like the policy announcement barring individuals of trans experience from serving in the military, is discrimination of the highest order, against people who want to go above and beyond to offer their lives in service to their country. We cannot stand by and allow this to happen. We support the efforts of groups like Lambda Legal who are working to defend the rights of military members.

“Despite what President Trump would have you believe, this attack on members of the military who live with HIV isn’t based on financial or medical concerns, nor military readiness - it’s just old-fashioned bigotry. We urge the Trump Administration to reevaluate its policy and uphold the right of people living with HIV to serve,” said Wirth.

First announced in February 2018 by the Department of Defense, the policies colloquially known as “Deploy or Get Out” or “Deploy or be removed” were pitched as an attempt to improve military readiness for deployment. These policies instruct the Pentagon to discharge any service member who is unable to be deployed for more than 12 months. Due to archaic policies put in place before the widespread use of antiretroviral therapies (ARV), all HIV-positive service members are classified as “undeployable.” Thus, without any action before October 1, the Pentagon will be forced to discharge the 1,200 HIV-positive service members currently enrolled in the service. In addition, civilians living with HIV who wish to join the military are currently barred from doing so, and this policy would reinforce that prohibition.

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.