May 19th, 2020

The ACT NOW: END AIDS Coalition (ANEA) remains firmly committed to ending HIV as an epidemic in America, even as the COVID-19 pandemic brings new challenges to community and government-led initiatives to rein in new transmissions. While continued access to testing, treatment, and prevention is vital to communities affected by HIV, protecting the health of these communities and of staff within HIV/AIDS organizations from COVID-19 is also of crucial concern. We believe it is imperative that community-based organizations(CBOS) and their funders prioritize physical distancing at this time and avoid any and all non-essential in-person contact.

Politically motivated calls for an expedited re-opening of the economy during a global pandemic have led some states to re-open and loosen preventive restrictions, despite experts warning that these measures have the potential to increase COVID-19 infections and deaths. ANEA urges community organizations to listen to public health experts and delay in-person gatherings—unless absolutely necessary—until conditions improve and the virus is properly contained. The underlying health conditions and structural inequities experienced by the populations we serve create additional dangers that must be factored into any plans to re-engage in-person with affected communities.

**ANEa calls on our coalition members, HIV funders, and CBOS to sign-on to this statement in a shared commitment to elevate and safeguard the diverse needs of everyone within our communities.**

Foundation and health department leadership must offer clarity in terms of what work deliverables can shift from in-person to remote, what can be delayed or canceled, and how CDC guidelines will be implemented to protect staff and communities on the ground, given the acute healthcare emergency of COVID-19.

HIV disproportionately impacts Black communities and other people of color, people who inject drugs, women, gay and bisexual men, and transgender people are; many of these communities are also facing unique challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The latest COVID-19 data illuminate racial and ethnic disparities among people who have suffered health complications and death due to COVID-19. Now is the time for policymakers, funders, and community leaders across the HIV movement to act in the preservation of the health of the individuals that make our community unique and resilient.

In order for CBOs to mitigate risks of COVID-19 for their staff and clients, we ask HIV funders and grant-makers across the country to offer more flexibility and continued funding to programs involved in *Ending the HIV Epidemic*. We’ve seen strong examples of such leadership from a number of funders, as well as on a federal level from the supplemental emergency funds to Ryan White and HOPWA and the extended deadline to the PS20-2010 funding opportunity being offered as part of the *Ending the HIV Epidemic* initiative. We ask for even more flexibility as the pandemic continues to disrupt American life, as well as transparent and open commitments from all public and private funders to support strict physical distancing measures at the state, county, and local levels.

With our collective experience in creatively addressing infectious diseases in adverse conditions, community-led organizations, our funders, and all stakeholders in HIV have the potential to play a leading role in fighting COVID-19 in our communities while continuing to drive down new HIV transmissions. We must all work to provide CBOs with the flexible resources and autonomy they need to
address the evolving needs of the communities they serve while avoiding any unnecessary exposures to COVID-19.

Please contact Jeremiah Johnson at Treatment Action Group with any questions about this statement: jeremiah@treatmentactiongroup.org

Sincerely,

ACT NOW: END AIDS Coalition
Treatment Action Group
Housing Works
Leisha.org
NMAC
AIDS Alabama
Equality Federation
National Working Positive Coalition
Positive Women's Network - USA
Prevention Access Campaign
SisterLove, Inc.
GMHC
APLA Health
Caring Ambassadors Program, Inc.
AIDS United
American Academy of HIV Medicine
END HIV Houston
Equality North Carolina
African American Health Alliance
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
My Brother's Keeper, Inc.
Coalicion Cero VIH PR
JustUs Health
Cascade AIDS Project
AIDS Treatment Activists Coalition (ATAC)
Global Liver Institute
U.S. People Living With HIV Caucus