

February 26, 2003

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush,

As a group of leading organizations dedicated to reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS and improving women's health worldwide, we are heartened by the proposal outlined in your State of the Union address to dramatically increase U.S. funding in response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. However, we are deeply disturbed to learn that the Administration is contemplating an expansion of the so-called Mexico City policy to cover some or all international HIV/AIDS funds, thereby disqualifying from U.S. funding many organizations positioned to be key partners in carrying out your "Emergency AIDS initiative." Any such restrictions can only impede progress in the battle against HIV/AIDS and erode the good will generated by the Administration's renewed commitment to funding HIV/AIDS programs.

It is our understanding that organizations using an integrated public health approach to prevent the spread of HIV and to treat and provide care for people living with AIDS will be disqualified under the expanded policy. This is indefensible. Governments and leading donor institutions throughout the world strongly support integrated family planning and HIV prevention programs as the best approach to improving public health. The World Health Organization (WHO) Global Sector Strategy for HIV/AIDS underscores that existing family planning programs "provide a clear entry point for the delivery of HIV/AIDS interventions." USAID, the World Bank, the European Union and other leading donors in every region encourage integration as a matter of good public health practice and economic efficiency.

For women, access to integrated programs and services can make the difference between life and death. Women now represent half of those infected with HIV worldwide and 58 percent of those in Sub-Saharan Africa where the AIDS epidemic has taken the greatest toll to date. Integrated services offer women confidential outlets for voluntary counseling and testing, referrals for or direct provision of prevention of maternal-to-child transmission (MTCT), and treatment of other diseases. In addition, these services provide accurate information on sensitive issues, such as whether and how HIV-positive mothers can safely breastfeed their newborns; confidential access to MTCT; and a source of information and resources free from the stigma frequently associated with stand-alone HIV prevention programs. Such services are pivotal to preventing new

infections and to improving the survival rates of those infected, while addressing other urgent public health priorities.

We represent a broad spectrum of organizations with a range of specific interests and points of view, but stand unified in our resolve to expedite U.S. assistance to those most affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. At this critical time it is urgent to eliminate barriers to effective programs not erect new ones. We therefore oppose any expansion of the "Mexico City" policy and urge the Administration in the strongest possible terms to abandon its plan to expand these restrictions in any form.

Sincerely,

ACT UP Philadelphia, PA
Advocates for Youth
AIDS Action
AIDS Action Baltimore
AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth & Families
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
AIDS Project Los Angeles
AIDS Treatment Data Network
Alliance for Microbicide Development
American Association of University Women
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Jewish World Service
American Psychological Association
American Public Health Association
Americans for Democratic Action
Artists for a New South Africa
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
Association of Nurses in AIDS Care
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals
California Family Health Council, Inc.
California Microbicides Initiative
Catholics for a Free Choice
Center for Health and Gender Equity
Center for Reproductive Rights
Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers University
Center for Women Policy Studies
Choice USA
Colorado NARAL
Concern America
Council of Religious AIDS Networks
Dignity USA

EngenderHealth
Family & Nursing Care
Family Violence Prevention Fund
Feminist Majority
Gay and Lesbian Medical Association
Gay Men's Health Crisis
Global AIDS Alliance
Global Campaign for Microbicides
Gynuity Health Projects
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America
Health GAP (Global Access Project), USA
Housing Works, Inc.
Human Rights Campaign
Human Rights Watch
The Hunger Project
International AIDS Vaccine Initiative
International Center for Research on Women
International Council of Jewish Women
International Health & Development Associates
International Partnership for Microbicides
International Rescue Committee
International Women's Health Coalition
Ipas
John Snow, Inc.
Lutherans Concerned, South Carolina
Management Sciences for Health
Margaret Sanger Center International at Planned Parenthood of New York City
Marie Stopes International
Mehera Women Development and Concern
Microbicides as an Alternative Solution
Montrose Clinic, Houston, TX
The NAMES Project Foundation
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Abortion Federation
National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors
National Association for Victims of Transfusion-Acquired AIDS
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Association of People with AIDS
National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems
National Association of Social Workers
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Women's Organizations
National Episcopal AIDS Coalition
National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
National Health Law Program

National Minority AIDS Council
National Network for Youth
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women and Families
National Women's Health Network
Near East Foundation
Network of Sex Work Projects
NOW Foundation Women's Health Project
Open Society Institute
Pacific Institute for Women's Health
Pathfinder International
People For the American Way
Physicians for Human Rights
Plan USA
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Population Action International
Population Connection
Population Institute
Presbyterian AIDS Network
Presbyterian Church (USA), Washington Office
Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH)
Project Inform
Refugees International
Relief International
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Religious Consultation on Population, Reproductive Health and Ethics
Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing
SAAIDS (South Asia Against AIDS Foundation, Inc.)
San Francisco AIDS Foundation
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States
Society for Women Against AIDS in Africa
Student Global AIDS Campaign
The Alan Guttmacher Institute
Title II Community AIDS National Network
Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), South Africa
Treatment Action Group
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
Women's EDGE
Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER)
Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children
Women's Environment and Development Organization
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Women's Ordination Conference
Worldwatch Institute

Cc: Claude Allen, Deputy Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services

Paula Dobriansky, Under Secretary for State of Global Affairs, Department of State

Julie Louise Gerberding, Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Jay Lefkowitz, Deputy Assistant to President for Domestic Policy

Andrew Natsios, Administrator, United States Agency for International Development

Anne Peterson, Assistant Administrator, Bureau for Global Health, USAID

Colin Powell, Secretary of State

Karl Rove, Senior Advisor to President

William Steiger, Special Assistant to the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services

Tommy Thompson, Secretary of Health and Human Services