



April 19, 2019

The Honorable Roy Blunt, Chair
The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Support for \$227.3 million to fight the STD Epidemic

Dear Senator Blunt and Senator Murray,

AIDS Healthcare Foundation urges the U.S. Congress to fully fund the response to the alarming and frightening increase in new cases of sexually transmitted diseases with a \$227.3 million appropriation for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

AHF operates 22 STD treatment centers, also known as AHF Wellness Centers, in nine states in the U.S. See www.freestdcheck.org STDs are at the highest levels ever, and continuing to grow at an accelerated pace, while federal funding for STD prevention has remained flat over the past 20 years. As you determine fiscal year 2020 funding levels, we ask that you please support \$227.3 million, an increase of \$70 million, for STD prevention at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Between 2013 and 2017 across the country, gonorrhea has increased 67%, primary and secondary syphilis has increased 76%, and congenital (mother-to-child) syphilis has increased 154%, all with devastating health consequences, including infertility and stillbirth. State and local health departments that are largely supported by federal funding through STD prevention at CDC, have been struggling to keep up with the record numbers of new STD cases with limited and starving resources. According to the CDC, there were close to half a million cases of gonorrhea 468,514 in the U.S. in 2016 with at least 3.6 % showing resistance to antibiotic used to treat infection.

The STD prevention program at CDC, which funds STD programs in all 50 states, and seven large cities, has remained flat-funded over the last 15 years, leaving STD programs unable to meet the increasing demands on their health staff, who provide essential safety net services, including tracking and testing pregnant women for syphilis.

For example, in Missouri, CDC funding for STD prevention has decreased by 17% while the number of STD cases have quadrupled. See: <https://khn.org/news/syphilis-invades-rural-america-missouri-health-care-infrastructure-crumbling/>

From 2008-2017, STD rates have increased in all states where AHF Public Health Division provides HIV and STD testing services. Georgia reports a 52.7% increase in chlamydia cases, a 39.3% increase in gonorrhea cases, and a 52.1% increase in syphilis cases over the past decade. Ohio reports a 30.3% increase in chlamydia cases, a 42.6% increase in gonorrhea cases, and a 149.0% increase in syphilis cases over the past decade. Dallas reports a 50.2% increase in chlamydia cases, a 47.2% increase in gonorrhea cases, and a 91.4% increase in syphilis cases over the past decade. Texas reports a 50.2% increase in chlamydia cases, a 47.2% increase in gonorrhea cases, and a 91.4% increase in syphilis cases over the past decade. Nevada reports a 68.2% increase in chlamydia cases, a 154.1% increase in gonorrhea cases, and a 417.2% increase in syphilis cases over the past decade. California reports a 47.0% increase in chlamydia cases, a 192.2% increase in gonorrhea cases, and a 215.5% increase in syphilis cases over the past decade. New York reports a 32.2% increase in chlamydia cases, a 99.3% increase in gonorrhea cases, and a 79.1% increase in syphilis

cases over the past decade. Florida reports a 40.8% increase in chlamydia cases, a 35.8% increase in gonorrhea cases, and a 95.2% increase in syphilis cases over the past decade.

We urge you to adequately fund the fight against the out of control STD epidemic that is threatening public health. Thank you very much for considering our position.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Hassell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

John D. Hassell
National Director of Advocacy