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Executive Committee

October 15, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

On behalf of the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD), whose members administer state HIV prevention and care and viral hepatitis programs nationwide, we commend you for your leadership toward establishing a robust health system for all Americans. As you negotiate health reform legislation with Congress, we urge you to include public health, wellness and prevention initiatives in your list of priorities for the final legislation.

HIV/AIDS and viral hepatitis continue to be major public health concerns for our nation. Every nine and a half minutes, someone in the U.S. is infected with HIV and six million Americans are currently infected with hepatitis B and C. Health departments have made progress in responding to these epidemics, but have been unable to turn the tide of new infections due to inadequate resources allocated to our public health infrastructure, capacity and programs. A 21st Century U.S. health system must include universal access to public health services that protect the health of all Americans throughout their lives, including HIV and hepatitis testing and prevention services and treatment, in turn lessening the burden of medical costs for intensive treatment for these chronic infectious diseases. Following are the key elements that we believe must be included in the final health reform package:

- A *Prevention and Public Health Fund* with dedicated, mandatory funding that will support state and local public health prevention programs in a concerted approach designed to reduce the number of new infections and empower individuals to improve and protect their health. The creation of a new grant program to strengthen core public health is long overdue and will affect the ability of health departments to address HIV and hepatitis in their jurisdictions. Additionally, we would like to

stress the importance of our nation's public health surveillance systems. Increased resources for implementation and upgrading disease surveillance systems to increase completeness and efficiency are urgently needed.

- *Public Health Workforce Corps/Recruitment and Retention Programs* to attract critically needed public health workers through incentives such as scholarships and loan repayment in return for service in governmental health departments. Grants to states for training of mid-career public health and allied professionals would aid in retention of staff.
- A *National Prevention and Health Promotion Strategy* to set specific goals and objectives for improving the health of the nation through federally-supported prevention, health promotion, and public health programs, and establish measurable actions and timelines for meeting prevention and health promotion goals.
- *Community Transformation Grants* to state and local governments and community-based organizations to address the community level factors that support health and equity. This program would support community efforts to engage in quality prevention.
- Standards for data collection and analysis that require *data collection on health disparities* by characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identify, and primary language.

Thank you for your continued support for prevention and care programs for low-income Americans living with HIV/AIDS and at risk for infection. We applaud your leadership in addressing this preventable and costly disease through the development of a National HIV/AIDS Strategy, and welcome the opportunity to work with you to establish national health reform that includes strong public health and wellness provisions as well as fight to bring down the incidence of HIV in our nation.

Sincerely,



Julie M. Scofield
Executive Director

cc: Jeff Crowley