

June 26, 2019

Dr. Robert R. Redfield  
Director Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Dear Dr. Redfield:

We, the undersigned organizations, community members, advocates, and leaders are writing to urge the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), the DeKalb County Board of Health, the DeKalb County Chief Executive Officer and DeKalb County Commission to address concerns regarding the recent \$1.5 million allocation from the CDC to DeKalb County to reduce HIV transmission, illness, and death. Collectively, we represent some of the leading national, regional and local organizations focused on ending the epidemic, especially in highly impacted Black communities.

Black communities have been disproportionately impacted by the HIV epidemic since the start due in part to the lack of engagement and transparency with these communities around health policy, funding and long-range planning to address barriers to healthcare access. Structural violence in the form of laws grounded in racism, misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia and discrimination in healthcare settings cause additional trauma and act as barriers to care for Black cis and transgender women and Black gay and bisexual men and is reflected in the high rates of new diagnoses among these communities. Locally, this has meant that Georgia and metro Atlanta continue to be at the top of national rankings for new cases of HIV. According to the Georgia Department of Health, DeKalb County is one of Georgia's top 3 counties with a high HIV burden. Approximately 1 in 6 persons diagnosed with a new HIV infection and 1 out of 7 persons living with diagnosed HIV infection (PLWH) in Georgia is a resident of DeKalb County. Among the new HIV cases (regardless of stage) diagnosed in DeKalb County between 2010 - 2016, nearly 4 out of 6 occurred among African-Americans.

The communities most impacted by HIV must take the lead in articulating their needs and priorities in order for health and social services to be effective. As such, we are requesting the following information to provide greater clarity around the recent \$1.5 million allocation from the CDC:

- How DeKalb County was selected to receive funding,
- What was the depth and quality of input from impacted communities, in making the funding determination,
- Will the County establish a forum of community representatives to serve in an advisory capacity in the decision making body through this six-month planning process
- Will the county consider implementing a collective impact model and hire a backbone organization selected by the community board, that would serve as the administrative entity for the planning period and the dissemination of funds that has been determined by an open and participatory process of your planning board,
- How will progress be measured and will it be done in a manner that is transparent?

We also recommend that as the Georgia Department of Public Health prepares the proposal for *PS19-1906 Strategic Partnerships and Planning to Support Ending the HIV Epidemic in the United States*, that you host a community information session to inform and receive feedback and recommendations from the HIV workforce of Fulton, DeKalb, Gwinnett, and Cobb counties on the proposed activities BEFORE its submission to CDC on July 12. Let the DeKalb County process be a lesson learned that the inclusion of community is necessary during every phase and decision of the planning process.

The possibility of ending the AIDS epidemic in the United States and Georgia is real. The tools to do so are now within our grasp. But those tools remain ineffective if we continue to fund existing planning structures knowing they do not yield the outcomes necessary for moving Georgia closer to ending the epidemic.

We look forward to receiving your responses to our request for greater understanding, dialogue, and collaboration.

AIDS United  
Program Manager, Southern HIV Impact Fund Marvell Terry II

AIDS Research Consortium of Atlanta (ARCA)  
Founder Dr. Melanie Thompson

Black AIDS Institute  
President and CEO Raniyah Copeland

Black Futurists Group  
Founder Devin Barrington-Ward

Counter Narrative Project  
Executive Director Charles Stephens

Georgia Equality  
Deputy Director Eric Paulk

Living Room  
Deputy Executive Director Daniel Driffin

THRIVE Support Services  
Co-Founders Dwain Bridges and Larry Walker

Sisterlove  
Founder/CEO Dazon Dixon Diallo

Solutions Not Punishment Coalition (SNaP Co)  
Program Director Toni-Michelle Williams

Southern Black Policy and Advocacy Network  
Founder and CEO Venton C. Hill-Jones

CC:

Dr. Jono Mermin Director of CDC's National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB (NCHHSTP)

Dr. Eugene McCray Director, Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention (CDC)

Dr. Kathleen Toomey, Commissioner Georgia Department of Public Health

Michael Thurmon, CEO DeKalb County

Dr. Sandra Ford, Director DeKalb County Board of Health