



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Circe Gray Le Compte, Director of Communications Telephone: (202) 234-5120 ext. 309 * E-mail: communications@nmac.org

NMAC Honors National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

February 7, 2007 - Washington, DC - Today, the **National Minority AIDS Council** honors the seventh annual **National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day** (NBHAAD). Held each year on February 7, NBHAAD seeks to increase awareness, participation and support for HIV prevention, care and treatment among African Americans. HIV/AIDS has had a devastating impact on African Americans communities since the epidemic began three decades ago. As Dr. Fullilove comments in the recently released NMAC report, *African Americans, Health Disparities and HIV/AIDS: Recommendations for Confronting the Epidemic in Black America*, African Americans are infected with, and die from, HIV/AIDS more than any other racial or ethnic group, though they represent only 13% of the U.S. population. In 2004, the CDC reported that blacks accounted for half of all new HIV/AIDS diagnoses, with an AIDS case rate among adults and adolescents more than 10 times higher than that of whites. Over 200,000 African Americans have died of AIDS in the past twenty five years.

If unchecked, HIV could undermine the very future of black America. With your help, NMAC, along with other organizations, can stop the AIDS crisis among African Americans, once and for all.

NMAC cannot do this work alone. We need you.

This NBHAAD Day, NMAC, in a joint call to action with the Campaign to End AIDS, challenges you to get together with friends, family and neighbors to call Congress toll-free at (888) 802-1207 and tell your Senator and Representative: "We need your help to stop the AIDS crisis in Black America. This year's federal budget must include new funding for AIDS housing, prevention and treatment to implement the five-point action plan recommended by the National Minority AIDS Council." These five recommendations, outlined in detail in *African Americans, Health Disparities and HIV/AIDS: Recommendations for Confronting the Epidemic in Black America*, include:

1. **Expand Access to Safe, Stable Housing** Ask your representative to support the expansion of HOPWA (Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS) funding and capital construction programs nationwide.
2. **Reduce the Impact of Incarceration** Reduce the impact of incarceration as a driver of new HIV infections within the African American community by:

* Providing voluntary, routine HIV testing of prisoners upon entry and release

- * Making HIV prevention education, substance abuse programs and condoms available in prison facilities

- * Expanding re-entry programs to help formerly incarcerated persons successfully transition back into society

3. Stop Stigma and Expand Support for Black Men Who Have Sex with Men
End marginalization, reduce stigma and stop discrimination against black gay and other men who have sex with men (MSM) by:

- * Expanding HIV prevention and leadership development initiatives for Black MSM

- * Addressing and ending homophobia that fuels stigma

4. Expand Knowledge and Encourage Voluntary HIV Testing
Expand basic HIV prevention education programs by:

- * Promoting early identification of HIV through voluntary, routine testing

- * Connecting those in need to treatment and care as early as possible

5. Reduce HIV Infections among Injection Drug Users
Reduce the number of HIV infections in the African American community caused by injection drug use by:

- * Expanding substance abuse prevention programs

- * Expanding drug treatment and recovery services

- * Expanding clean needle exchange programs for active injection drug users to minimize the risk of infection through needle sharing

To raise awareness and amplify the voice of communities of color in the national debate about, and response to, HIV/AIDS, NMAC announced the formation of the National Minority HIV/AIDS Policy Partnership during a press conference held at the National Press Club, in Washington, DC, on February 5. This historic partnership includes social justice organizations from across the United States, such as the Indigenous Peoples Task Force; National Council of La Raza; NAACP; National Rainbow/PUSH Coalition; National Urban League; American Civil Liberties Union; the Asian American Justice Center; Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum; United Church of Christ; and League of United Latin American Citizens. Together, they will develop joint position statements, train constituents on public advocacy and coordinate grassroots action. They also will promote full funding of programs to lessen the impact and vulnerability of communities of color to HIV infection.

NMAC thanks you for supporting its efforts in the fight against HIV/AIDS. This year marks the agency's 20th anniversary collaborating with minority community-based organizations throughout the United States to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS in communities of color. The

agency has planned a year-long program of events that will culminate on November 28 with a gala featuring a performance by Patti Labelle, who will receive an award for her work combating this epidemic. There also will be an auction to retire the mortgage of NMAC headquarters.

About the National Minority AIDS Council

The National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC) will honor its twentieth year as the premier national organizational dedicated to developing leadership within communities of color to address challenges of HIV/AIDS, in 2007. NMAC has responded to the needs of communities of color by developing programs aimed at enhancing the skills necessary to confront this health crisis, including a public policy education program, national and regional training conferences, a treatment and research program and numerous publications. Today, NMAC is an association of AIDS service organizations providing valuable information to community-based organizations, hospitals, clinics and other groups assisting individuals and families affected by the AIDS epidemic. NMAC's advocacy efforts are funded through private funders and donors only. For more information, call: (202) 483-6622; e-mail: communications@nmac.org; or visit: www.nmac.org.

###