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NEW NATIONAL POLICY PARTNERSHIP UNITES LEADING ORGANIZATIONS TO SPEAK OUT ON HIV/AIDS IN MINORITY COMMUNITIES

National Minority AIDS Council, National Council of La Raza, NAACP, Rainbow/PUSH, National Urban League, ACLU, Indigenous Peoples Task Force, Asian American Justice Center, United Church of Christ, and the League of United Latin American Citizens Partner to Promote Action on AIDS in America's Minority Communities, Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum

Washington, DC, February 5, 2007 ~The National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC), which is commemorating twenty years of advocacy to support minority communities seriously affected by HIV/AIDS, today announced the formation of the National Minority Policy Partnership on HIV/AIDS. The new advocacy coalition will bring together some of the country's largest and most powerful minority organizations to speak with a united voice on the epidemic. Today's announcement coincides with the commemoration of National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, held annually on February 7.

Racial and ethnic minorities represent the majority of new AIDS cases (72%) in the U.S., and have been disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS since the epidemic began over twenty five years ago, a trend that has continued to worsen. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, African Americans and Latinos represented 25% and 14% of cumulative AIDS cases respectively, a figure that had risen to 40% and 19% of cumulative AIDS cases by 2003. Together, Asian/Pacific Islanders and American Indians/Alaskan Natives represent 1-2% of new AIDS cases.

"The devastating impact of this epidemic across minority communities – African American, Latino, Native American and Asian – requires a strong, united and national response," says Damon Dozier, NMAC's Spokesperson and Director of Government Relations and Public Policy. "This new policy partnership promises to be a dynamic and powerful advocacy voice to improve HIV awareness, prevention, and access to care in the nation's minority communities."

In addition to NMAC, members of the new National Minority Policy Partnership on HIV/AIDS include the ACLU; Asian American Justice Center; Asian/Pacific Islander Health Forum; Indigenous Peoples Task Force; League of United Latin American Citizens; NAACP; National Congress of American Indians; National Council of La Raza; National Urban League; Rainbow/PUSH; and the United Church of Christ.

"HIV/AIDS is one of the most serious issues facing communities of color today," noted Jacob A. Gayle, head of the Global HIV Initiative at the Ford Foundation, a key sponsor of the new partnership. "Meeting this challenge means finding solutions to a host of issues – from housing and education to healthcare and other critical services – that directly impact the spread of HIV. The Ford Foundation is committed to supporting a community-wide response that builds on promising strategies from all of our leaders and institutions.

The National Minority HIV/AIDS Policy Partnership will significantly increase the impact of community of color voices in the national debate about and response to HIV by uniting some of the most powerful organizations and most respected voices in the country to share information, develop joint position statements, train constituents and coordinate public advocacy. The Partnership will work to promote full funding of programs to mitigate the impact of HIV and reduce HIV infection in communities of color, as well as social justice policies and programs to reduce the vulnerability of communities of color to HIV infection

The Partnership also will lobby at the state and federal level to support legislation that address the recommendations made by a blue-ribbon panel of experts on the recent NMAC report, *African Americans, Health Disparities and HIV/AIDS: Recommendations for Confronting the Epidemic in Black America*. These will include policies designed to:

- Eliminate marginalization of and stigma and discrimination against black men who have sex with men (MSM)
- Reduce the impact of incarceration as a driver of new infections
- Reduce the role of Injecting drug use in sustaining the epidemic
- Expand proven HIV prevention, diagnosis and care programs
- Stabilize communities at risk by increasing affordable housing

“The coming together of these organizations for the first time has historical significance,” noted Dozier. “The Partnership will increase our voice in the halls of government, and help to counter misinformation that has been circulating for years about the quality of the government’s response to HIV/AIDS here at home.”

In addition to government-level advocacy, the Partnership is committed to a community focus to reach those community level leaders and institutions, especially those in underserved and rural communities, with the greatest need for expanded HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support services. Partnership members will join forces to:

- Challenge and attack the root causes of health disparities among communities of color;
- Address public policies that increase HIV risk in communities of color;
- Educate constituents and apply political pressure to ensure full funding for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, and for appropriate prioritization of services to communities of color disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS
- Encourage partner organizations to take bold action to raise the profile of the epidemic and needed responses

“The National Minority HIV/AIDS Policy Partnership will be an important and welcome new voice on Capitol Hill,” noted Congresswoman Donna M. Christensen (D-US Virginia Islands). “While the African American communities has been – and remains – the hardest hit by HIV/AIDS, every one of our minority communities experiences an excessive burden from this epidemic. These united voices will help get attention on Capitol Hill and, we hope, make it easier to pass progressive measures that will help stem the tide of HIV/AIDS in racial and ethnic minority communities.”

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.