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USCA Addresses HIV/AIDS Crisis in African American Communities

November 8, 2007 – Palm Springs, CA – The second plenary of the **2007 United States Conference on AIDS** today addressed the “**HIV/AIDS Crisis in the African American Community**” and featured a panel of accomplished speakers that included: Cornelius Baker of the National Black Gay Men’s Advocacy Coalition and Senior Communications Advisor of COACH, AED; Dr. Kevin Fenton, Director of the National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; The Honorable Johnny Ford, Mayor of Tuskegee, Alabama; Debra Fraser-Howze, President/CEO of the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS (NBLCA); Ravinia Hayes-Cozier, Director of Government Relations and Public Policy, National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC); Dr. Beny Primm, Founder and Executive Director of Addiction Research and Treatment Corporation; Sheryl Lee Ralph, NMAC Celebrity Spokesperson; Valerie Spencer, Founder of Transcend Empowerment Institute; Ms. Debra Fraser-Howze, Executive Director of the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS; and Nancy Wilson, Board Member of NMAC.

“The session exemplified the need to make this year’s theme – One Family, One Voice, One Spirit – a reality in our approach to HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment in African-American communities,” says Hayes-Cozier, who served as the session’s moderator. “We speak with many voices and many faces. But, whether we are focused on the unique needs of black gay men or the issues facing heterosexual African-American women, we speak and work with the same goal mind: reducing and eliminating HIV/AIDS from our communities.”

Nancy Wilson, NMAC’s newest board member, has leveraged her extraordinary singing career to raise HIV/AIDS awareness since the 1980s. “I thought after 55 years, I would be able to retire ... and just enjoy being a grandmother. But at the meeting this at the [Centers of Disease Control and Prevention] this past March [for the launch of the Heightened National Response to the HIV/AIDS Crisis among African Americans], I learned that there was much work still to be done. Young people need to know how to take responsibility for their health, and feel empowered to make the right choices.”

Paul A. Kawata, Executive Director of the National Minority AIDS Council, noted that “Today’s session was an affirmation to those working on the frontlines, and a clarion call to those in positions of power, that it is unacceptable that Black communities account for over half of all new HIV infections reported to the CDC each year. It is unacceptable that AIDS is one of the leading causes of deaths among African-American women today.”

Though each speaker described different ways to address the epidemic, Hayes-Cozier explained: “All of us working to address HIV/AIDS in black communities come from a place of compassion for those living with and impacted by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. We’re looking

forward to doing more activities and forming new relations and collaborations FUBU style – that is, for us, by us.”

About USCA

The 2007 USCA, set for November 7-10, in Palm Springs, CA, will address the theme, “One Family, One Voice, One Spirit,” and is expected to bring together over 3,500 HIV/AIDS professionals.

Sponsored by the National Minority AIDS Council since 1997, USCA, the largest annual HIV/AIDS meeting in the United States, has strengthened the domestic community-based response to HIV/AIDS by bringing together professionals from across the country to learn new skills and build partnerships and collaborations.

The conference’s extensive selection of over 200 institutes, seminars, workshops and roundtables sessions addressing every aspect of the AIDS epidemic – from nutrition and treatment to prevention and international issues – enables participants to customize their training and networking experiences according to their unique professional needs.

About USCA’s Sponsor – NMAC

The National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC) was founded in 1987 to develop leadership within communities of color to address challenges of HIV/AIDS. NMAC has responded to the needs of communities of color by developing programs enhancing the skills necessary to confront this health crisis, including a public policy education program; national and regional training conferences; treatment and research programs and trainings; numerous publications and a website: www.nmac.org. The agency also serves an association of AIDS service organizations, F/CBOs, hospitals, clinics, health departments and other groups assisting people and families living with and affected by the AIDS epidemic. NMAC's advocacy efforts are funded through private funders and donors only.