

Dear PAN Members and Friends,

Once again we honor World AIDS Day (WAD) and the theme this year is Shared Responsibility: Strengthening results for an AIDS-free generation. The global community has embarked on an historic quest to lay the foundation for an eventual end to the AIDS epidemic. The effort is not merely visionary; it is entirely feasible. Especially, since a large 2011 study showed that antiretrovirals (ARVs) cut transmission by 96% among discordant couples.¹ This proved without a doubt that drugs can greatly reduce the amount of virus carried, making folks less likely to infect or contract the deadly AIDS disease.

Only about one-quarter of one percent of the U.S. Federal budget is dedicated to advancing global health through programs that fight diseases like HIV and AIDS. That small sliver of the budget works out to an average annual U.S. taxpayer contribution of \$14.14 to government supported global health programming.² Currently, there are 9 million people receiving ARV therapy worldwide, and the global goal is 15 million by 2015.³ More people affected by HIV today can go to work, attend school, and lead relatively healthy lives thanks to global partnerships with the Global Fund, PEPFAR, UNAIDS, and private foundations. It is exciting to know that the pace of progress has quickened and in the past 2 years, new infection rates have fallen by 50% in more than 25 countries (13 in sub-Saharan Africa).⁴

However, the United States does not evidence such progress. There are nearly 50,000 new infections each year and only 1/3 of the nearly 1.2 million people with HIV in the US have been prescribed with antiretroviral treatment. In addition, HIV care is suffering as a result of sequestration. In the last year domestic HIV and AIDS programs have been cut by nearly 380 million dollars.⁵ The result is staff reductions, limited educational programming and HIV testing. A few organizations have had to close down completely. These outcomes may certainly lead to increased infections, higher health care costs, and even deaths. At a time when we have a national HIV and AIDS strategy grounded in science, it is tragic to reverse progress. Our goal of an AIDS-free generation in the U.S. is a dream far from reality. We urge Congress and our President to reverse cuts and adequately fund critical public health programs.

Our work is not done and the vision of an AIDS-free generation is still elusive. People continue to face discrimination, stigma, and injustice. Women and girls especially continue to be at a much higher risk because of gender inequality and

¹ http://www.who.int/hiv/topics/strategic_use_arv/en/.

² www.amfAR.org

³ www.AIDS.gov

⁴ www.AIDS.gov

⁵ www.theaidsinstitute.org

sexual violence. There is still a 30% gap between resources needed and those available to achieve 2015 goals.⁶

We would encourage you to look at the HIV Crimination in your community. One source is the SERO Project <http://seroproject.com/>. The Center for HIV Law and Policy released the [H.R.1843, REPEAL HIV Discrimination Outreach Toolkit](#). This toolkit provides advocates with resources that can be used in outreach efforts to your state's members of Congress. Advocates can use this toolkit as a guide for letter writing campaigns, calling your Representative's state and Washington D.C. offices, or meeting with your Representative or the Representative's legislative staff.

We earnestly encourage your membership and involvement with Presbyterian AIDS Network (PAN) now: http://www.phewacommunity.org/images/PHEWA_membership_fillable_form.pdf Through faith we are called to transform public policies. In collaboration with others may we work toward the vision where ALL people can benefit from equitable and sustainable access to HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support.

Sincerely,

Ann Jones and George Kerr,

Co-moderators for the Presbyterian AIDS Network (PAN),

A ministry network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA)

The Presbyterian AIDS Network (PAN)
A network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA)
Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministry, Presbyterian Mission Agency
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
<http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/pan> and <http://www.phewacommunity.org/>

⁶ www.AIDS.gov