

AIDS United, in honor of Juneteeth, is [republishing today](#) an open letter standing in solidarity with the current racial justice movement building momentum across the country. AIDS United, along with 53 members of its Public Policy Council, issued the letter earlier this month, and it was first published in [HIV Plus Magazine](#). The letter is addressed to all elected officials, and has garnered 23 additional signers since it was first published.

Juneteenth commemorates the end of legal slavery in the United States. It also reminds us of the resilience of the ancestors who came before us and the need for us to continue striving for full liberation and racial justice in this country.

We offer this letter, now with 77 organizations, as a sign of our commitment to this work.

Dear Elected Official:

The HIV community is no stranger to protests. From our formation in the early 1980s, our progress has depended upon our willingness to put our bodies and livelihoods on the line to stand up to the unjust and discriminatory systems that neglect us.

The progress we have made in fighting the HIV epidemic would not be possible without HIV advocates taking to the streets and screaming their truth to those in power. We owe a great debt to the titans of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s whose example and leadership taught us so much about the need for direct action and civil disobedience.

As protests currently occur throughout the country, AIDS United's Public Policy Council must state publicly and unequivocally that we are in solidarity with all of those who protest violent and oppressive systems. We are also committed to infusing racial justice throughout all our work. We do so because we know it is the only way we can end the HIV epidemic in the United States.

Let us be clear: There is nothing deficient about Black and Brown bodies.

And yet, those of us who are Black and Brown are more likely to die from medical conditions as different as childbirth and heart disease. There is nothing specific about Black bodies that make us more susceptible to HIV, and yet nearly half the new HIV diagnoses in the United States are among Black people.

The problem is neither medical nor biological. It is sociological. The problem is white supremacy.

We have seen white supremacy in action in dramatic ways recently with the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and Tony McDade. We have also seen white supremacy play out in less obvious ways recently, too, with the COVID-19 death rate among Black communities far outpacing other communities.

White supremacy is all around us, and it is taxing.

The mission of AIDS United and our Public Policy Council is to end the HIV epidemic in the United States. We cannot achieve that without prioritizing the health and well-being of Black people. We also know that we cannot achieve that without major shifts in our justice system.

AIDS United, in partnership with the ACT NOW: END AIDS Coalition, released in 2018 a community-driven plan to end the HIV epidemic. That document called for significant criminal justice reforms, including:

- Repealing laws that criminalize HIV and other infectious diseases.
- Decriminalizing sex work.
- Undoing the harassment and criminalization of immigrant communities.
- Minimizing criminal justice involvement for people who use drugs.
- Reducing mass incarceration.
- Eliminating both mandatory minimums for drug offenses and cash bail.
- Removing legal barriers to accessing public housing and other social benefits for individuals with past drug convictions.

At the foundation of each of these policy proposals is a thorough commitment to valuing Black lives. These concrete proposals will go a long way toward making our communities safer and ending the HIV epidemic in the United States.

We urge you — whether you are the mayor of a small town, a member of Congress or the President of the United States — to enact these policies. We also call on you to enact all policy through a racial justice and equity lens.

AIDS United's Public Policy Council joins our voice with the current generation of civil rights champions. We join the calls for justice for the victims of systemic, racist violence in the United States. We join with all those who are rejecting an abusive and dehumanizing criminal justice system that for too long has targeted Black and Brown communities. Will you join us?

AIDS United

Jesse Milan Jr., President & CEO

The AIDS United Public Policy Council:

AIDS Action/Fenway Health — Boston, MA
AIDS Alabama — Birmingham, AL
AIDS Foundation of Chicago — Chicago, IL
American Academy of HIV Medicine — Washington, DC
Amida Care — New York, NY
APLA Health, Los Angeles, CA
Association of Nurses in AIDS Care — Washington, DC
Black AIDS Institute — Los Angeles, CA
Black Women's Health Imperative — Washington, DC
Callen-Lorde Community Health Center — New York, NY
Careteam+ Family Health — Myrtle Beach, SC
Cascade AIDS Project /Prism Health — Portland, OR
Cempa Community Care — Chattanooga, TN
Center for HIV Law & Policy — New York, NY
Christie's Place — San Diego, CA
Collaborative Solutions — Birmingham, AL
Community Education Group — Washington, DC
CrescentCare — New Orleans, LA
Delaware HIV Consortium — Wilmington, DE
Desert AIDS Project — Palm Springs, CA
Equitas Health — Dayton, OH
GMHC — New York, NY
God's Love We Deliver — New York, NY
Harm Reduction Coalition — New York, NY
Housing Works — New York, NY
Howard Brown Health — Chicago, IL
Intercambios Puerto Rico — Fajardo, PR
JRI Health — Boston, MA
JustUs Health — St. Paul, MN
Latino Commission on AIDS — New York, NY
Los Angeles County Department of Public Health — Los Angeles, CA
Los Angeles LGBT Center — Los Angeles, CA
Metro Inclusive Health — St. Petersburg, FL
My Brother's Keeper, Inc. — Jackson, MS
Nashville CARES — Nashville, TN
National Alliance for HIV Education and Workforce Development — New York, NY
National Black Justice Coalition — Washington, DC
North Carolina AIDS Action Network — Charlotte, NC
Oklahoma AIDS Care Fund — Oklahoma City, OK
Positive Women's Network — USA — Oakland, CA
Prevention Access Campaign — New York, NY
Prism Health North Texas — Dallas, TX
Puerto Rico Community Network for Clinical Services, Research, and Health Advancement — San Juan, PR
San Francisco AIDS Foundation — San Francisco, CA
SisterLove — Atlanta, GA
Southern AIDS Coalition — Birmingham, AL
Thrive Alabama — Huntsville, AL
Transgender, Gender Variant, Intersex Justice Project — San Francisco, CA
Treatment Access Expansion Project — Boston, MA

Treatment Action Group — New York, NY
Urban Coalition for HIV/AIDS Prevention Services — Washington, DC
Us Helping Us, People Into Living — Washington, DC
Vivent Health — Milwaukee, WI; St. Louis, MO; Denver, CO
Whitman-Walker Health — Washington, DC
Women's Collective — Washington, DC

Additional organizations:

AIDS Action Baltimore
All God's Children Metropolitan Community Church
AVAC
Cero VIH Puerto Rico
Coai, Inc.
Community AIDS Action Group of South Central Indiana
DC Fights Back!!
GenderNexus
Global Justice Institute
HIV Modernization Movement-Indiana
iHealth
Lambda Legal
NASTAD
National Working Positive Coalition
NCSD
Presbyterian Health Education and Welfare Assoc.
Presbyterian HIV Network, PHEWA, Presbyterian Church, USA
PSPS
Sero Project
The Damien Center
The Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation
The Never Alone Project
Waves Ahead & SAGE Puerto Rico

If your organization would like to add its name to this letter, you may do so here: <https://forms.gle/XCr6YTPsXPkov4nt8>