

ARTISTS FOR A NEW SOUTH AFRICA

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September 28, 2007

Dear Representative _____,

We, the undersigned, are writing to ask for your leadership on HIV/AIDS, the worst health crisis in human history. Already 20 million members of our human family have died of AIDS and, increasingly, it is women and girls who are most severely affected by the disease. Females are biologically more vulnerable to HIV infection than males, and women and girls also are more severely impacted socially and economically by AIDS. In sub-Saharan Africa, females account for 60% of all infections and 76% of infections among young people between the ages of 15 and 24. Among women, 80% of infections result from sex with their husband or primary partner.

America is playing an essential role in the global fight against AIDS. As you know, a majority of US government funding for international HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment efforts comes through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). While we welcome President Bush's recent call to increase PEPFAR funding to \$30 billion, we are deeply concerned about PEPFAR's policies that restrict vital monies from being used on the most effective prevention methods available. The substantial US financial contribution to the fight against HIV/AIDS and our tax dollars would have a greater impact in this catastrophic epidemic if they are used to support science-based prevention strategies and also to specifically address the risk factors unique to women and girls.

You have the historic opportunity to help halt the AIDS pandemic. **We urge you to become a cosponsor of HR 1713, the Prevention Against Transmission of HIV for Women and Youth (PATHWAY) Act.**

As you may know, the PATHWAY Act requires the Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator to develop a comprehensive and integrated prevention strategy targeted at the particular risks faced by women and girls. Furthermore, the bill strikes the 33% abstinence-until-marriage PEPFAR earmark. This move, suggested by the Government Accountability Office in April 2006, would untie the hands of America's grantees so that they can use the prevention funds in the most appropriate, effective ways to best serve their target populations. By removing the earmark and facilitating an integrated, comprehensive approach, PATHWAY has the potential to significantly improve the effectiveness of PEPFAR-funded programs worldwide and to help curb the spread of HIV/AIDS.

HIV/AIDS has already had devastating impact throughout the developing world, with millions of lives lost and millions of children orphaned by the disease. The consequences of the disease will only worsen unless leaders take bold action now. By empowering the most vulnerable populations with scientifically-based prevention methods, millions of lives can be saved.

We stand with Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-CA) and Congressman Christopher Shays (R-CT), their co-sponsors, and numerous religious, medical, civil rights, student and grassroots organizations in supporting the PATHWAY Act as an essential step in ending this global health crisis.

You and your fellow legislators have the power to change and save lives by supporting this crucial legislation. We urge you to act now.

Sincerely,

Gillian Anderson
Sharon Lawrence Apostle & Dr. Thomas Apostle
Dianna Cohen & Jackson Browne
Mary Steenburgen & Ted Danson
Lisa Marie & Cary Elwes
Shelley Fabares & Mike Farrell
Sharon Gelman
Noah Gray-Cabey
Nicole Lyn Hill & Dulé Hill
Kitsaun King
Amy Madigan & Ed Harris
Alexandra Paul
Erika Alexander & Tony Puryear
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Hattie Winston & Harold Wheeler
Vanessa Williams & Andre Wiseman
Alfre Woodard & Roderick Spencer
Peter Yarrow

