

AIDS Foundation

O F C H I C A G O

Comments to the President's Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS

Kaethe Morris Hoffer, Manager of Federal Affairs, AIDS Foundation of Chicago

July 19, 2001

Good afternoon. Thank you very much for providing me with this opportunity to speak to you. It is a real honor to be here today. My name is Kaethe Morris Hoffer, and I am the Manager of Federal Affairs for the AIDS Foundation of Chicago. The AIDS Foundation of Chicago has worked in Chicago since 1985 to provide central leadership in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

In addition to supporting case management and supportive services for people living with HIV/AIDS, AFC has a private fundraising and grant-making program, and grants in the neighborhood of one million dollars annually to community-based organizations and other agencies that serve people living with HIV/AIDS.

I work in AFC's policy department, where I try to facilitate a healthy and collaborative relationship between Illinoisans living with HIV/AIDS, the organizations that serve them, and the men and women who represent and serve us in Washington, D.C.

I want to acknowledge and give special thanks to two of your members from Illinois whose work in the AIDS fight is deeply appreciated by the AIDS Foundation of Chicago - Phillip Burgess (National Director of Pharmacy Affairs, Walgreens) and Stuart Burden (Senior Program Officer, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation). I also want to extend AFC's deepest thanks to Regina Aragon and Terje Anderson, for the work they have and will be doing with AFC, in support of our efforts to nurture and encourage political and other leadership on AIDS issues, and from within the community of people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

My comments are as follows:

The AIDS Foundation of Chicago considers this body to be an important and useful council, are very glad that it will be continued, and we hope that your collective and collected intelligence on HIV/AIDS will in fact be attended to by this administration.

Since January, we have been paying a great deal of attention to the statements, the silences, and the substantive proposals relating to HIV/AIDS that have come from President Bush and Secretary Thompson, and we are VERY concerned. We believe that a reasonable conclusion to draw from everything that has been said and not said, proposed and not proposed, is that this administration is not committing the time, energy,

or resources necessary, to effectively fight HIV/AIDS, either here or in the other countries of our increasingly small global community.

We support, therefore, any efforts by this council to urge, nudge, cajole, pressure, etc., the President and his administration, to do the following:

- A. Recognize that HIV/AIDS is absolutely a crisis and an emergency in people of color communities in this country.
- B. Recognize that HIV/AIDS is a crisis increasingly affecting young people and women in our country, and that we have much to learn about the role of inequality broadly—along race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and economic lines—in the AIDS epidemic.
- C. Recognize the deep importance of providing adequate funding to existent care, prevention, housing, research and treatment programs—both domestically and internationally, and including monies for microbicide and vaccine research.
- D. Please help this administration recognize that it must eradicate, and stop supporting, “abstinence only” education, which does NOTHING to effectively prevent risky behaviors, and instead encourages the very risky—and foolish—belief of some politicians that screaming about morality is equivalent to empowering and encouraging healthy behaviors in young people.
- E. Please also help this administration better understand the importance of affordable and quality healthcare and housing to the fight against AIDS, as well as the importance of available substance abuse treatment, and increasing the availability of sterile syringes to injection drug users.
- F. Finally, given the undeniable role that bigotry against gay men played in the early stages of the American AIDS epidemic, and the undeniable role that bigotry against people living with HIV/AIDS, against people of color, against women, against injection drug users, and still against men who have sex with men, please help this President understand that fighting AIDS requires fighting inequality and bigotry generally and help him see that a failure to fight HIV/AIDS is, frankly, to stand in support of poverty, devastation, bigotry, and completely dehumanizing inequality.

Thank you.

Kaethe Morris Hoffer
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
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