

March 22, 2010

Re: H. Res 1064

Dear Members of the U.S. House of Representatives,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to urge you to stand in support of the health and human rights of all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, and support House Resolution 1064.

H. Res. 1064, introduced on February 3, 2010 by House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Howard Berman (D-CA), condemns anti-gay legislation now making its way through the parliament in Uganda. H. Res 1064 affirms the intrinsic human dignity of all people, regardless of sexual orientation, and expresses deep concern that the “Anti-Homosexuality Bill, 2009” introduced in the Ugandan Parliament would set a troubling precedent for other countries – including extreme penalties of death and life in prison, and offenses for a broad range of individuals if they fail to report suspected homosexuality to the authorities, all of which violate fundamental rights and hinder an effective response to HIV and AIDS. The resolution calls upon the President and Secretary of State to impress upon the Ugandan Government the universality of human rights, regardless of sexual orientation; to express unequivocal U.S. opposition to the “Anti-Homosexuality Bill, 2009”; and to ensure that resources committed to the fight against HIV are utilized effectively, targeting affected populations reflected by local epidemiology of the disease.

Criminal penalties against individuals based on their sexual orientation or gender identity violate universal human rights, demean human dignity, and threaten to undermine the effectiveness of the global response to HIV.

The effort to halt and reverse the spread of HIV and AIDS globally is compromised by punitive legal environments that further marginalize communities at high risk for HIV. Gay men and other men who have sex with men (MSM) in low- and middle-income countries are 19 times more likely to be infected with HIV than the general population^[1]. Criminal laws that expressly target this population drive the community underground, fueling risk-taking behavior in a climate of fear and silence, and making it difficult to reach MSM with the information and services they need. Investments in PEPFAR, totaling over \$32.3 billion since FY 2004, will not achieve their full potential in a political climate that is hostile to key affected populations.

The proposed “Anti-Homosexuality Bill” in Uganda has drawn international criticism—from multiple Democratic and Republican members of the US Congress, Secretary Clinton, the Vatican, and heads of state, including President Obama. Thousands of human rights and health groups as well as physicians and health professionals from around the world and across the U.S. have spoken out against the proposed bill.

In March 2009, the United States signed on to the United Nations Statement on Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, which reaffirms the universality of human rights and

calls for the repeal of same-sex criminalization laws. As members of the U.S. House of Representatives, you have a key role to play in championing the realization of these principles on a domestic and world stage.

We thank you for your leadership in this regard and ask for your continued support to stand up for health and human rights for all, regardless of sexual orientation. We urge you to express your support for these principles by signing on to House Resolution 1064.

For more information, please contact Krista Lauer (klauer@msmgf.org; 213-201-1317) and Jirair Ratevosian (jirair.ratevosian@amfar.org; 202-331-8600).

Sincerely,

Adelson Consulting Services, Inc.
Advocates for Youth
Africa Action
AIDS Action Baltimore
AIDS Action Council
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
The AIDS Institute
AIDS Policy Project
AIDS Project Los Angeles
American Jewish World Service
American Public Health Association
amfAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research
Association of Nurses in AIDS Care
AVAC
Boulder County AIDS Project
Cascade AIDS Project
Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project (CHAMP)
Council for Global Equality
EngenderHealth
Family Care International
The Fenway Institute
Gay Men's Health Crisis
Global Action for Children
Global AIDS Alliance
The Global Forum on MSM & HIV (MSMGF)
Global Justice Ministry, Metropolitan Community Churches
Health Alliance International
HIVictorious, Inc.
Housing Works
Human Rights Campaign
Infectious Diseases Society of America/HIVMA Center for Global Health Policy
International Association of Physicians in AIDS Care
The International Center For Advocacy On The Right To Health (ICARH)

International HIV/AIDS Alliance
International Rectal Microbicide Advocates (IRMA)
International Women's Health Coalition
Internet Interventions, Inc.
Justice Resource Institute
Maryland Hepatitis Coalition
Metropolitan Latino AIDS Coalition (MLAC)
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS
National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC)
Physicians for Human Rights
Queer People's Health Collective
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)
STOP AIDS Project
U.S. Positive Women's Network (PWN)
Women Organized to Respond to Life-threatening Disease (WORLD)
World Aids Campaign

^[i] Baral S, Sifakis F, Cleghorn F, Beyrer C. Elevated Risk for HIV Infection among Men Who Have Sex with Men in Low- and Middle-Income Countries 2000-2006: A Systematic Review. *PLoS Med.* 2007 Dec;4(12):e339