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## ***U.S. People Living with HIV (PLHIV) Caucus Challenges the US Government to Live up to its Commitments on the 3-Year Anniversary of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy***

July 13, 2013 -- Three years ago, the first-ever U.S. National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS) was released by the Obama administration to much fanfare. The NHAS identified key areas to advance HIV prevention and improve access to HIV care, including, importantly, through the meaningful involvement of people living with HIV (PLHIV).

Today, on the third anniversary of the NHAS, the [US People Living with HIV Caucus](#) (the Caucus) is disappointed that there has been little progress towards realizing such meaningful involvement, particularly through the organized efforts led by people living with HIV themselves, in the implementation of the NHAS.

Two years ago, the Caucus, under the stewardship of Co-Secretary Vanessa Johnson, helped organize a consultation between Caucus members and key officials in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and other federal agencies, to discuss NHAS implementation and the important role of PLHIV in achieving the goals of the Strategy. Meaningful involvement of PLHIV is even more critical in light of recent data that demonstrates the potential of viral suppression to significantly alter the course of the epidemic.

The greater involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS, known as the GIPA principle, is founded on a democratic commitment to actively include PLHIV participation in decision-making. This principle is recognized as key to addressing the epidemic through providing protections for rights of PLHIV and ensuring that health interventions are created that can effectively reach vulnerable populations. The U.S. government committed to the GIPA principle (a global version of the Denver Principles) in the 2001 United Nations General Assembly Special Session Declaration of Commitment on HIV and AIDS and re-confirmed its commitment in the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS.

In tandem with the HHS consultation, the Caucus developed and released two white papers with specific recommendations describing mechanisms by which leadership by and active involvement of PLHIV can, for example, [promote regular HIV testing, support treatment adherence and retention in care](#), and address political and cultural barriers to HIV testing, adherence and retention in care. The papers also detailed specific suggestions [to involve PLHIV in NHAS implementation](#).

“It is discouraging that DHHS has not acted on the recommendations we provided and which they received, at the time, with enthusiasm,” said Cecilia Chung, Caucus Chair. “We provided the blueprint for effective and meaningful involvement, but they have failed to act with the urgency and focus the epidemic requires.”

“The Caucus reaffirms its commitment to support the National HIV/AIDS Strategy implementation,” said Barb Cardell, Caucus Vice Chair, “but we need leadership, not lip service, from federal agencies to realize the clearly stated objective in the NHAS of meaningful involvement of PLHIV.

“The NHAS seeks to create a world where ‘HIV infections are rare, and when they do occur every person regardless of age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or socio-economic circumstances, will have unfettered access to high quality, life-extending care, *free from stigma and discrimination,*’ a goal we strongly support,” said Andrew Spieldenner, Caucus Co-Secretary, “but we need to see the same support from federal policy leaders before that dream will be realized.”

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The United States People Living with HIV (PLHIV) Caucus is a group of organizations, coalitions, networks, client groups and individuals with HIV who advocate for people with HIV (PLHIV) in the U.S. Formed in January 2011, the Caucus includes diverse and accountable representation by people living with HIV from throughout the United States and their local and national networks, including the Positive Women’s Network – USA, the Global Network of People Living With HIV/AIDS- North America, the Campaign to End AIDS, the International Community of Women with HIV and the Sero Project. For more information about the Caucus, please visit our website: [hivcaucus.org](http://hivcaucus.org) and “like” our facebook page: <http://facebook.com/hivcaucus>.