

TAG

Treatment Action Group

September 1, 2016

Secretary Hillary Clinton
Hillary for America
Post Office Box 5256
New York, NY 10185-5256

Dear Secretary Clinton,

As a national group of healthcare providers, advocates, and patients dedicated to preventing and treating viral hepatitis, we welcome your recent comments in Cleveland regarding the high price of pharmaceutical drugs to cure the hepatitis C virus (HCV). We are encouraged by the broad support for government action on the high price of pharmaceutical drugs, especially those for viral hepatitis, and to see this issue being directly addressed by elected officials at all levels of government. However, we are writing you today out of concern that your current healthcare platform does not specifically or adequately address the national and international viral hepatitis epidemics. We must work together to raise the profile of hepatitis B and C as urgent public health priorities.

As you may know, chronic viral hepatitis affects 3.5 to 6 million Americans and is the primary cause of liver cancer in the United States. Unlike most other kinds of cancer, liver cancer incidence and death rates are on the rise in our country. Despite having a vaccine, many people are not protected against the hepatitis B virus (HBV), with significant global need for birth dose vaccine to prevent mother to child transmission, and to improve vaccination coverage among young adults in the U.S. Despite having a cure, HCV kills more people in the United States than any other infectious disease, including HIV-related illness. 50-75% of Americans living with HBV or HCV do not know their status. Funding for the CDC's Division of Viral Hepatitis has not kept pace with the increased infection rates in Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania and many other states. As we write, the National Academy of Sciences is drafting their forthcoming National Elimination Strategy for Viral Hepatitis, which can only strengthen federal and state-based efforts to progress towards this shared goal. But plans and strategies can only take us so far; without political commitment and resources, HBV and HCV will continue to spread, causing needless illness and death.

We must overcome all barriers to preventing, identifying, and treating HBV and HCV, including vaccinating all adults and newborns at risk for HBV, and curing everyone living with HCV. These barriers include high drug prices; restrictions on treatment access, especially for those on Medicaid; and lack of infrastructure for viral hepatitis prevention, surveillance, testing, and treatment. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released guidance on November 5, 2015, to ensure access to HCV treatment for Medicaid beneficiaries, but the guidance has not been enforced or implemented nationwide. It is crucial that Medicaid beneficiaries living with HCV have access to the cure regardless of where they live, and without restrictions based on disease progression or sobriety requirements.

In 2014, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force gave a “B” grade for screening all adults at high risk for HBV infection. On July 7, 2016, CMS proposed that Medicare cover HBV screening. This is a significant advance in efforts to identify those with chronic HBV infection and link them to treatment. It is critical that all high risk individuals have access to hepatitis B screening as an additional preventive service.

Beyond the health care system, some of the greatest barriers to the elimination of HBV and HCV are lack of culturally appropriate and responsive services (e.g., HBV disproportionately impacts people of Asian, Pacific Island, and African descent and HCV disproportionately impacts Native American and African American communities); the criminalization of drug use; lack of appropriate harm reduction and syringe exchange programs; and the social stigma related to HBV and HCV. We appreciate that you have included substance use disorders and criminal justice reform in your existing platform, but we urge you to go further.

- We ask that you consider adding to your healthcare platform explicit support for eliminating HBV and HCV both nationally and internationally. Nationally, we urge you to review the recommendations from the National Academy of Sciences and commit to the goal of eliminating HBV and HCV in the United States. Globally, we urge you to support the World Health Organization’s (WHO) stated goal of eliminating HBV and HCV as global public health concerns by 2030, with measurable targets.
- We ask that you support the enforcement of the CMS Guidance released on November 5, 2015, titled “Assuring Medicaid Beneficiaries Access to Hepatitis C (HCV) Drugs.” CMS should be required to take action in those states which are refusing to move their drug utilization policies into compliance with the requirements of the Social Security Act, as articulated in the Guidance.
- We ask for your ongoing commitment to ensure affordable access to medically necessary drugs and that you make all efforts, including executive actions, to ensure significant price reductions and remove high prices as a barrier to ending the viral hepatitis epidemic.
- We also respectfully ask for the opportunity to bring a small group of viral hepatitis experts and advocates to meet with your health policy team to discuss specific policy proposals and needed resources to address viral hepatitis domestically and abroad.

With your leadership, and your unique ability to call attention to these national and global epidemics, we can establish national and international policies that address and eventually eliminate viral hepatitis.

Sincerely,

Annette Gaudino
Co-Director, HCV Projects
Treatment Action Group

Marcus Rodriguez	ACRIA	New York	NY	10018
Andrew Velez	ACT UP	NEW YORK	NY	10011
Luis Santiago	ACT UP New York	New York	NY	10003
Lynda Dee	AIDS Action Baltimore	Baltimore	MD	21202
Megan O'Day	AIDS Community Research Consortium (ACRC)	Redwood City	CA	94063
Ronald Johnson	AIDS United	Washington	DC	20005
Amy Smith	Alameda Health System	Oakland	CA	94602
Perry Junjulas	Albany Damien Center, Inc.	Albany	NY	12203
Doug Wirth	Amida Care	New York	NY	10122
Therese R. Rodriguez, CEO	Apicha Community Health Center	400 Broadway	NY	10013
Anita Chang, MD	Asian Health Services	Oakland	CA	94607
Andrea J. Wilson	Blue Faery: The Adrienne Wilson Liver Cancer Association	Birmingham	AL	35209
Kimberly Grider, RN, CCTC, CCM	Blue Shield of CA	Rancho Cordova	CA	95670
Socrates A. Caba	Bronx Parent Housing Network	Bronx	NY	10456
Garrett Stenson	C.O.R.E. Medical Clinic, Inc.	Sacramento	CA	95816
Ana Maldonado MPH, DHSc, PA-C	California Academy of PA's	San Francisco	CA	94105
Andy Liu, MD	California Pacific Medical Center	San Francisco	CA	94115
Kimberleigh Smith	Callen-Lorde Community Health Center	New York	NY	10011
Sidney Yassinger, MD FACP	Capitol Gastroenterology	Carmichael	CA	95608
Lorren Sandt	Caring Ambassadors Program	Oregon City	OR	97045
HARKIRAT BAL	CCARE	FRESNO	CA	93727
Robertr Greenwald	Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation of Harvard Law School	Cambridge	MA	2138
Amy Tang	Charles B. Wang Community Health Center	New York	NY	10013
Heather Lusk	CHOW Project	Honolulu	HI	96813
Judith Feinberg MD	Cincinnati Exchange Project	Cincinnati	MP	45237
Diane Arneth	Community Health Action of Staten Island	Staten Island	NY	10301
Tamara Whitney	DOH	Kaneohe	HI	96744
Lynne Tavera	East Bay Center for Digestive Health	Oakland	CA	94707
Gladys Nieves-Vázquez	El Punto en la Montaña	San Juan	PR	929
Alexandra Rodríguez-Romero	El Punto en la Montaña	Puerto Rico	PR	969
Camila Gelpi-Acosta	El Punto en la Montaña	PR	PR	929
Alan Timothy C Lunceford Stevens	End AIDS Now	New York	NY	10014
Howard Josepher, LCSW	Exponents	New York City	NY	10004

Judy Broeckel MD	Fairchild Medical Clinic	Yreka	CA	96097
Kelsey Louie	Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC)	New York	NY	10001
Emily Murphy	Georgetown University School of Medicine	Washington	DC	20007
Mary Beth Levin	Georgetown University School of Medicine	Washington	DC	20005
Donna R Cryer, JD	Global Liver Institute	Washington	DC	20016
Saira Alimohamed, MD	grady health system	atlanta	GA	30033
Jason Cianciotto	Harlem United Community AIDS Center, Inc.	Astoria	NY	11106
Mike Selick	Harm Reduction Coalition	New York	NY	10001
Dominic Chow	Hawaii Center for AIDS	Honolulu	HI	96813
Jewel Castro	Hawai'i Island HIV/AIDS Foundation	Kea'au	HI	96749
		New York		
Ronni Marks	HCMMSG-The Hepatitis C Mentor and Su	City	NY	10016
Silvia Hinojosa-Price, R.N.	HCVets.com	Palm Desert	CA	92211
Ryan Meyer	HealthHCV (HealthHIV)	Washington,	DC	20009
				81401-
Kenneth Vail, MPH, MA	Healthy Rhythm Consulting	Mintrose	CO	3438
Chari Cohen	Hep B United	Doylestown	PA	18902
Heather Lusk	Hep Free Hawaii	Honolulu	HI	96816
Mohammed Abdul-Kadir	Hepatitis B Coalition of Washington	Seattle	WA	98104
Kate Moraras	Hepatitis B Foundation	Doylestown	PA	18902
		Scotch		
Dennis M Simon	Hepatitis C Association	Plains	NJ	7076
	Hepatitis C Support Project / HCV			
Alan Franciscus	Advocatge	Sacramento	CA	95605
	Housing Works		NY	11201
Jennifer Huggans-Zapeta	La Clínica de la Raza	Oakland	CA	94501
Zara Marselian	La Maestra Community Health Centers	San Diego	CA	92105
Luis Scaccabrozzi	Latino Commission on AIDS	New York	NY	10010
Sebastian Solomon	Legal Action Center	New York	NY	10014
Kim Nguyen	Lifelong Medical care	Berkeley	CA	94107
Cynthia Sharpe, FNP	Lifelong Medical Care	Oakland	CA	94612
Andrew	Malama Pono	Lihue	HI	96766
Antonio Quiros	MUSC Children's Hospital	Charleston	SC	29425
Murray Penner	NASTAD	Washington	DC	20001
	National Association of Hepatitis Task			
William M. Remak	Forces	Petaluma	CA	94954
	National Native American AIDS Prevention			
Patrick Allen Roberts	Center (NNAAPC)	Denver	CO	80227
Ryan Clary	National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable	Washington	DC	20006
C Virginia Fields	NBLCA, Inc.	New York	NY	10027
Julia Klems	Needle Exchange Emergency Distribution	Berkeley	CA	94707
Darla burrow	nevada hepitis c task force	reno	NV	89506
kate barnhart	New Alternatives	Brooklyn	NY	11209

Ken Osepyan	Pacific Pride Foundation	Santa Barbara	CA	93101
Catherine Kirby	PBCers Organization	Petaluma	CA	94954
Madeline	Point Defiance AIDS Project	Tacoma	WA	98142
Emalie Huriaux	Project Inform	San Francisco	CA	94103
Paul Sousa	Sacramento Area S.T.O.P. Hepatitis Task-Force	Sacramento	CA	95838
Brian Levitt	San Jose gastroenterology	San Jose	CA	95116
Paul J Pockros,MD	Scripps Clinic	La Jolla	CA	92037
Robin Roth	SF Hepatitis C Task Force	San Francisco	CA	94107
Darry Cannady,	South Central Educational Development, Inc.	Bluefield	WV	24701
James Adams, MD	Southern Tier AIDS Program	Binghamton	NY	13850
Joel Gallant, MD, MPH	Southwest CARE Center	Santa Fe	NM	87505
Edward LeSage	Southwest CARE Center	Santa Fe	NM	87505
Kimberly Morgan Bossley	Swedish Medical Center	Seattle	WA	98112
Jean Mooney	The Bonnie Morgan Foundation for HCV	Longmont	CO	80504
Richard Zaldivar	The CHOW Project	Honolulu	HI	96813
Bryn Gay	The Wall Las Memorias	Los Angeles	CA	90042
Michel Mendler MD	Treatment Action Group	New York	NY	11222
Jane Hanson	UCSD Health	San Diego	CA	92130
Marina Roytman	UCSF Medical Center	SF	CA	94501
Erica Yamauchi	University of Hawaii	Honolulu	HI	96816
Elizabeth Ackerman	University of Hawaii at Manoa	Honolulu	HI	96816
Douglas R. LaBrecque, MD, FACP, FAASLD	University of Hawaii College of Pharmacy	Honolulu	HI	96821
Syed Abdul Basit	University of Iowa College of Medicine	Iowa Ctiy	IA	52242
Paola Ricci	UNSOM	Las Vegas	NV	89102
Matt Curtis	VA Medical Center	Minneapolis	MN	55417
Robert Heimer	VOCAL New York	Brooklyn	NY	11217
Georgetown Medical AIDS Advocacy Network (GMAAN)	Yale School of Public Health	New Haven	CT	6511
George G. Saxton		Washington	DC	20007
Susan Campos	San Francisco	San Francisco	CA	94102
Esperanza Walmsley	San Francisco	San Francisco	CA	94112
Alex Lapasaran	The Villages	The Villages	FL	32162-2285
Richard A Zak M.D.	Sparks	Sparks	NV	89436
Angela Teasdel	Chromo	Chromo	CO	81128
JAMES E RAST	Biloxi	Biloxi	MS	39532
Stephen Wong	Knoxville	Knoxville	TN	37923
Vicki Mcintyre	Plano	Plano	TX	75075
	Tucson	Tucson	AZ	85748

CHAU THANH NGUYEN, M.D.	LOS ALTOS HILLS	CA	94024		
Huma Aziz	San Jose	CA	95136		
Lucinda Porter, RN	Grass Valley	CA	95945		
James G O'Gara	Ramona	CA	92065		
Debra Fox	Cedar Hill	TX	75104		
Renee Cox	San Francisco	CA	94122		
Paula Budde	Minneapolis	MN	55438		
Amy Taylor	Belmont	CA	94002		
Dida Kutz	Marina	CA	93933		
Phu Tran	Wilsonville	OR	97070		
Kristin Ingram	Waddell	AZ	85355		
Terr Wilder	New York	NY	10024		
Afra Roet	SAN DIEGO	CA	92103		
Alison Case, MD	Methuen	MA	1844		
Timothy Fedorka	Kailua	HI	96734		
DONNA GILMORE	BROOKLYN	NY	11201		
Kathleen plaza	Honolulu	HI	96826		
Erica Yamauchi	Honolulu	HI	96816		
Mary Gene Ryan, MPH , RN, COHN-S/SM, FAAOHN			Ventura	CA	93003
Andrew	Honolulu	HI	96813		
Kavika Puahi	Waipahu	HI	96797		
William Scott Daly			Schenectady	NY	12306
A Toni Young	Community Education Group	Washington DC	20020		