



NATIONAL COMMISSION ON ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME

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COMMISSION RELEASES SECOND REPORT TO PRESIDENT BUSH

In its second Report to President Bush, the National Commission on AIDS today made five major recommendations for swift action, including creation of a "federal interagency mechanism" to coordinate a national plan for the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) epidemic.

The Commission also called for support of "disaster relief" legislation for cities and states heavily impacted by the HIV epidemic; federal housing aid to address the multiple problems faced by persons with HIV infection and AIDS, including many homeless people; support of anti-discrimination legislation; lifting of federal constraints that impede HIV education and prevention programs.

Dr. June E. Osborn, chairman of the Commission, said, "Throughout the nine long years of the epidemic many people in various roles in the Federal government have worked desperately to keep pace with the expanding demands of the epidemic as it pervades society.

"But a much more flexible and responsive mechanism is needed to coordinate the many components of governmental action. The president can be most helpful

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in creating such a coordinating body to provide focus at the top," she added.

In commenting on the proposal for a new federal interagency mechanism, Dr. David E. Rogers, Vice Chairman of the Commission, said, "What mechanism would best serve the national needs, be it a Cabinet officers' Task Force or a coordinating council, is obviously for the President to determine.

"What is all too evident to the Commission is a critical lack of any top level federal group - clearly accountable and capable of swift, authoritative action -to coordinate efforts among HHS, HUD, Social Security, the VA and other government and private entities to deal with the AIDS crisis," he added.

The report is the second sent to the President and Congress by the Commission which took office last August 3. Congress created the Commission as an independent body to advise the Executive and Legislative branches of government on development of "a national consensus on policy" concerning the HIV epidemic.

The first report on December 5, 1989 cited a national health care system that was "singularly unresponsive to the needs of HIV-infected people" and called for a major federal effort to "begin solving the problems of health care delivery."

Today's report goes beyond those issues to say that failures in health care and many other HIV epidemic related matters can only be corrected with federal leadership and a "clear definition of government roles at all levels..."

The report's summary said that such lack of definition "has hampered our national ability to organize health care services, to recruit and train human services personnel, to provide housing for the sick, to provide effective AIDS education and prevention programs, to provide coordinated, comprehensive substance abuse treatment and prevention and to develop sufficient monies to finance all of these efforts."

The Commission's four other recommendations to the President and Congress are:

0 "Disaster relief" funds for those cities and states that are the most heavily impacted by the HIV epidemic.

0 Federal housing aid to address the multiple problems posed by HIV infection and AIDS.

0 Passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to provide protection against discrimination for those with HIV infection and AIDS. State and local governments should also pass laws forbidding discrimination in areas not covered by the ADA or other federal statutes.

0 Lifting of federal restrictions that are impeding the effective use of funds for HIV prevention and education programs.

Since August, 1989 the Commission has held nine days of hearings in Washington and Los Angeles plus four additional days of working group meetings in Boston and St. Paul. The Commission has also made site visits to Los Angeles, Newark, Jersey City, New York City and rural areas of Georgia where it has focused on a

number of issues including the impact of the HIV epidemic on the homeless, substance users, women, children, Hispanics, Afro-Americans and other minorities.

The report also congratulated President Bush for his "important and historic" speech on the HIV epidemic on March 29.

"His call for more preventive education, vaccines and new therapies to improve the care for the increasing number of Americans who will fall ill with this disease moves this nation in the proper direction. Now the President's commitment needs translation into action," the Commission report said.

The 15-member Commission includes five voting members appointed by the Senate, five appointed by the House and two appointed by President Bush. The three non-voting members are the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

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