



NATIONAL COMMISSION ON ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME

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STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

We, the Members of the National Commission on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) strongly support passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, legislation which would implement the key recommendation of the Presidential Commission on the Human Immunodeficiency Virus Epidemic.

People living with AIDS and HIV infection, and those regarded as such, deserve the same discrimination protections as all people with disabilities. Such protections from discrimination are not only necessary to enhance the quality of life for people with AIDS and HIV infection, they are -- as the Presidential Report and the Institute of Medicine have reported -- the linchpin of our nation's efforts to control the HIV epidemic.

Thousands of Americans who should seek voluntary counseling and testing services and many who need life-prolonging medical treatment will not come forward if they believe that doing so could result in the loss of their job or lack of access to public accommodations. Legislation that is based not only on compassion but sound public health principles is a must if we are to reach and assist these individuals.

We are extremely pleased that the majority of the United States Senate and the White House have made a bipartisan commitment to enact the Americans with Disabilities Act. We oppose any efforts to reduce the scope of coverage of the present bill, particularly with respect to HIV, the specific focus of this commission. The ADA will provide a clear and comprehensive mandate to greatly extend discrimination protections for people with disabilities. We are proud to endorse this landmark legislation.