

NLWJC - Kagan

DPC - Box 001 - Folder 024

AIDS - Discrimination

The Honorable William Jefferson Clinton
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On February 7, 1997, the Office of National AIDS Policy Director Patsy Fleming met with representatives of this Council and representatives of several Federal agencies to discuss elimination of discrimination against those infected with HIV. I am writing to you to express our deep concern about the lack of progress by those Federal agencies toward elimination of discriminatory policies. You will remember that almost three years ago you asked this Council to meet with you to discuss issues of major concern regarding HIV/AIDS. One of the most critical issues raised was the previously established policy of several Federal agencies (i.e., the U.S. Foreign Services, the Peace Corps, the Job Corps, the U.S. State Department, and the Military) requiring mandatory HIV testing, and exclusion of those found to be HIV positive.

At that time, you expressed your concern about and disapproval of such policies and instructed your staff to investigate those policies and report back to you. We are dismayed that the February 7, 1997 meeting clearly confirmed that policies requiring mandatory testing and exclusion from entry of all applicants found to be HIV positive continue in these agencies. The policies of these Federal agencies represent a disturbing aberration from the general application of HIV/AIDS employment practices by the vast majority of federal agencies.

We are also concerned that those already employed by such agencies who later test positive face discrimination in assignments, promotions, and career advancement opportunities. Particularly in light of the promise offered by new treatment options, these policies serve to deprive qualified HIV-positive individuals equal employment opportunity and to deprive the federal government of the contributions those individuals could be making as dedicating public servants.

The Council has little optimism that without your intervention these discriminatory policies might be changed. We would therefore urge, Mr. President, that you renew your instructions for review and reconsideration of such policies. It is only through such action that your commitment "to fight AIDS related discrimination at every turn" contained in your National AIDS Strategy can be realized.

Your Council stands ready to assist in any way you deem appropriate.

Thank you for your consideration and concern.

Sincerely,

Scott Hitt, MD
on behalf of the Council

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