



JOINT STATEMENT ON TRAVEL ADVISORY IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV



May 24, 2023

The ADAP Advocacy Association and the Community Access National Network (CANN) issued the following joint statement in response to a series of hateful bills passed by the Florida Legislature and signed into law by Governor Ron DeSantis. The ADAP Advocacy Association and CANN are hereby adjoined to the formal travel advisories issued by the NAACP, League of United Latin American Citizens, and Equality Florida – calling Florida ‘hostile’ to Black Americans, people of color and LGBTQ+ individuals. Both organizations also are concerned Florida’s politics is now hostile toward people living with HIV.

In response, both the ADAP Advocacy Association and CANN will suspend hosting any patient advocacy events in Florida, as well as restricting advocacy-related travel to the state by staff, consultants, or scholarship-funded patient advocates. Additionally, both groups strongly encourage people living with HIV to avoid traveling to the state for conferences, meetings, or events – or exercise an abundance of caution in doing so.

CANN’s President & CEO, Jen Laws (him/he/his) said, “We are particularly attuned to the politicization of public health, especially about how that politicization is harmful to people living with HIV and those communities and persons most affected by HIV, Hepatitis C, and substance use disorder. Florida has historically struggled in combatting the harms of insufficiently addressed public health crises due to politicization and bias infused public policies. Despite the good work from long-term, committed advocates in the state and at the Florida Department of Health, current political leadership is hell-bent on a mission to destroy progress made in the name of hollow, short-lived ‘victories’ in a manufactured destructive culture war.”

Whereas both organizations recognize the need to be present where political forces wish to silence marginalized communities, Florida has crossed a line in becoming hostile to the very existence to the communities most affected by HIV. This is a line which cannot be crossed without violating values held important to people living with HIV.

Speaking on behalf of the ADAP Advocacy Association, Brandon M. Macsata said, “We don’t take this decision lightly, and in our organization’s nearly twenty-year history it represents the first time we’ve felt compelled to issue a travel advisory for our community. Under the guise of anti-wokeness, Governor DeSantis has turned the Sunshine State into a breeding ground for hatred against anything gay, with a particular disdain for individuals who identify as transgender. We know that HIV disproportionately impacts gay men, transgender communities, and Black and Brown people – all of which are the marginalized groups being targeted by these hate-inspired laws.”



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In 2023, Florida has enacted a series of discriminatory, culture war laws that have created a hate-driven environment that undermines the dignity, respect, value, and safety of numerous marginalized communities, including Black Americans, people of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people living with HIV. They include expanding the controversial 'Don't Say Gay' law ([now prohibiting teachers from discussing sexual orientation and gender identity](#)), limiting the use of pronouns in school, [banning gender-affirming care](#) for minors, [prohibiting transgender people from using a bathroom](#) or changing room that matches their gender identity, [restricting drag shows](#), and [eliminating diversity, equity and inclusion programs](#) in Florida's public universities. Aside from Florida having draconian [HIV Criminalization laws on the books](#), Governor DeSantis signed the '[Right to Discriminate](#)' law that could adversely impact people living with HIV seeking to access care and treatment.

As Florida moves to harm transgender individuals, Black and Brown communities, and immigrant families undermines the exceptional work done in the last several years by the State Department of Health, and it only serves to further existing health disparities affecting these communities, particularly as it relates to HIV. For example, according to Florida's own data, while Black and Hispanic/Latino communities make up about 15.6% and 26.7% of the state's population, respectively, these same communities represent 37.7% and 39.6% of HIV diagnoses. Put another way, in Florida, while white people experience a rate of HIV diagnoses of 8.5 per 100,000 people, that rate among Black communities is 51.8 and for Hispanic/Latino communities it's 31.7.

Both organizations encourage local advocates, patients, and healthcare professionals residing in Florida to continue doing what they do best: putting patients before politics. The ADAP Advocacy Association and CANN will continue to support these efforts but doing so from outside the state.

For more information about the travel advisory for people living with HIV, contact the ADAP Advocacy Association at info@adapadvocacy.org or CANN at info@tiicann.org.

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