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Disease Experts Applaud End to HIV Entry Ban

Discriminatory Rule Had No Medical or Scientific Basis

The Infectious Diseases Society of America, the HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA) and the Center for Global Health Policy applauded President Obama's announcement today that his administration has lifted the two-decades-old ban on travel and immigration to the U.S. by HIV-positive individuals.

"Good riddance to this discriminatory rule that had no basis in public health or sound science," said HIVMA Outgoing Chair Arlene Bardeguez, MD, MPH. "This long-overdue move brings the U.S. in line with current scientific and international standards of public health and will lessen the painful stigma and discrimination suffered by HIV-positive people."

HIV infection is a manageable condition not transmitted through casual contact. Overturning the ban puts HIV-positive people on a level playing field with any other foreigner wanting to visit or immigrate to the U.S. The travel ban served to undermine public health by discouraging people from determining or disclosing their HIV status.

The prohibition on travel and immigration to the U.S. by people with HIV was put in place in the late 1980s. Congress overturned this law last summer, in legislation signed by President George W. Bush that also reauthorized the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, but it remained in place until today. The CDC supported reversing the ban, saying that HIV does not pose a risk to the general population and that removing it from the disease list reflects "public health best practices."

"This move brings common sense to US policy and means that people from developing countries who receive US funded-HIV treatment will finally be welcome here," said Kenneth Mayer, Co-Chair of the Global Center's Scientific Advisory Committee and professor at Brown University, where he directs the AIDS Program.

For more information on this topic or to arrange an interview with an HIV/AIDS expert, please contact Deirdre Shesgreen at 703-740-4954 or dshesgreen@idsociety.org.

The Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) is a professional society representing more than 8,600 infectious diseases physicians and scientists devoted to patient care, education, research, prevention, and public health. The HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA) is the professional home for more than 3,600 physicians, scientists and other health care professionals dedicated to the field of HIV/AIDS. Nested within IDSA, HIVMA promotes quality in HIV care and advocates policies that ensure a comprehensive and humane response to the AIDS pandemic informed by science and social justice.

The Center for Global Health Policy is an organization of physicians and scientists dedicated to promoting the effective use of U.S. funding for addressing the global HIV/AIDS and TB epidemics by providing scientific and policy information to policymakers, federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the media. The Center is a project of IDSA and HIVMA. All three organizations are based in Arlington, Va.