



**Statement of AIDS United to the United States House of Representatives
Committee on Oversight and Reform**

Hearing on: "HIV Prevention Drug: Billions in Corporate Profits after Millions in Taxpayer Investments"

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The following is a statement from AIDS United on today's House Oversight Committee hearing on the pricing practices of Gilead Sciences, Inc. related to its marketing of Truvada for PrEP and claims that the government may have failed to leverage use patents to which it may be entitled to negotiate lower prices and ultimately broader PrEP access:

Washington, DC -- "Today's hearing provides an important platform to both educate the public about the availability of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and explore how current structures for drug development, including marketing and pricing incentives, can create barriers to drug access. That the committee dedicated an entire hearing to PrEP is a welcome indication of House leadership's commitment to ending the HIV epidemic in the United States.

"Medicines only work if those who need them can access them, and AIDS United understands that price plays a significant role in an individual's ability to do so. Pharmaceutical drug assistance programs like Gilead's offer cost relief to consumers but are not a permanent solution. Priority must be given to identifying structural approaches to reducing barriers to drug access, including payment models, insurance market reforms, and incentives around drug patents. Other critical factors that are continual barriers to access include stigma, disparate access to health coverage, and a dearth of culturally relevant education prioritizing communities of color and other minority and marginalized populations about PrEP and the support available to help them access it.

"AIDS United was pleased to learn of Gilead Science's recent commitment to donate enough drugs to provide PrEP to 200,000 uninsured individuals a year. Given estimates that just 200,000 of the presumed 1.2 million people in the U.S. who would stand to benefit from PrEP are currently accessing it, this donation will address a significant need and advance efforts to end domestic HIV transmissions. AIDS United believes strongly that this donation must go to minority and marginalized populations, including Black and Latino gay and bisexual men, which have seen significantly lower rates of PrEP uptake to date than other communities.

“While the donation is one positive step, there remain larger challenges that require decisive and immediate attention: namely the patchwork system of payment models currently in place to provide access to PrEP in the United States. Whether municipal, state, or federally funded programs, private or public insurance, or Gilead’s various patient assistance programs, the complex systems through which PrEP coverage is available are daunting for individuals and can themselves pose very significant barriers. Indeed, we hear consistently from service providers that the cost of associated lab appointments and wrap-around services are often harder to cover for patients than the actual medications.

“These reports underscore the importance of expanding and maintaining a strong safety net health care system that provides access to affordable care delivered by high-quality community providers, including Ryan White clinics and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). Additional services associated with PrEP access that warrant more comprehensive and streamlined mechanisms for payment include mandatory laboratory screenings, medical visits, outreach, education, and treatment adherence, as well as patient navigation for people at risk for HIV.

“While we appreciate the historic donation of pharmaceutical products, donated medications alone cannot match the transformative impact on population health outcomes of comprehensive and credible health insurance coverage. This is why AIDS United and our Public Policy Council continue to advocate with all states to expand Medicaid. We continue to call on Congress to protect and expand the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) and oppose destabilization of the law and its protections for people with pre-existing conditions.

“AIDS United urges Gilead and the Department of Health and Human Services to continue to work together — in partnership with the larger HIV community — to expand and streamline access to PrEP for all those who could and should benefit from PrEP, particularly young gay and bisexual men of color, transgender individuals, women of color, and particularly those living in the U.S. South.”

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AIDS United’s mission is to end the HIV epidemic in the U.S. through strategic grant-making, capacity building, and policy. AIDS United works to ensure access to life-saving HIV care and prevention services and to advance sound HIV-related policy for U.S. populations and communities most impacted by the epidemic. To date, our strategic grant-making initiatives have directly funded more than \$104 million to local communities and have leveraged more than \$117 million in additional investments for programs that include, but are not limited to HIV prevention, access to care, capacity building, harm reduction and advocacy. www.aidsunited.org