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## **World AIDS Day: Advocates Call to Lift Federal Ban on Syringe Exchange - Take Politics Out of HIV Prevention**

NATIONWIDE -- The Harm Reduction Coalition (HRC), a national health and human rights advocacy group working to reduce drug-related harm, calls on Congress and the Administration to take action on World AIDS Day, December 1, to support syringe exchange programs as a proven, effective strategy to prevent HIV infection.

Extensive research demonstrates that syringe exchange is a highly successful, cost-effective intervention that reduces HIV transmission among injection drug users. Syringe exchange has gained the endorsement of a broad range of prestigious public health, medical and scientific experts and professional associations, and a majority of the American people support syringe exchange programs. Nearly 200 syringe exchange programs operate in the United States.

However, the U.S. government refuses to fund syringe exchange, both domestically and internationally. Congress has maintained a ban on the use of any federal monies for syringe exchange, starving programs of vital resources and contradicting effective public health strategies. Similarly, the White House has vehemently opposed syringe exchange in the global fight against AIDS.

Over a third of AIDS cases in the United States result from shared syringes and sexual transmission of HIV from infected injection drug users to their partners. Similarly, an estimated one third of all HIV cases outside of sub-Saharan Africa stem from injection drug use.

The AIDS epidemic will continue to spread unless government leaders on all level – local, state, federal, and international – embrace and support syringe exchange. In accordance with the World AIDS Day theme of accountability, we demand accountability from Congress and Administration:

- Strike language in appropriations bills that ban use of federal funds for syringe exchange
- Direct the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to allow use of HIV prevention funds for syringe exchange domestically
- Instruct the Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator to allow use of HIV prevention funds for syringe exchange internationally

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*For more information about the Harm Reduction Coalition, visit <http://www.harmreduction.org/>. For interviews with doctors, epidemiologists, advocates and injection drug users, contact Allan Clear, Executive Director at 917-470-6453, or Hilary McQuie, California Director, Harm Reduction Coalition (510) 444-6969 – [mcquie@harmreduction.org](mailto:mcquie@harmreduction.org)*