



## **The National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network Commemorates National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day Combating HIV and COVID-19 Together**

March 10, 2021: As we commemorate National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, Black Americans are faced with the overwhelming challenges associated with the HIV epidemic and the COVID-19 pandemic. Like the HIV epidemic, COVID-19 has illuminated the structural failings of our health care system and revealed the disproportionate impact it has on Black communities across the country, particularly Black women and girls.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 7,000 women received an HIV diagnosis in the United States in 2018. Black women accounted for the largest proportion of new HIV diagnoses (58 percent) among all women in 2018 and 14 percent occurred among women aged 13-24. The rate of new diagnoses among Black women is 14 times the rate among white women and Black women represented about one quarter (26%) of new HIV diagnoses among all Blacks in 2018. Additionally, Black women and girls are more likely to suffer from pre-existing health conditions that exacerbates their vulnerability to COVID-19. These pre-existing conditions coupled with a myriad of health disparities and inequities experienced by Black women and girls living with HIV profoundly impact their ability to maintain positive health outcomes.

“Confronting the myriad of public health issues mean eliminating disparities and inequalities when it comes to providing healthcare for Black women and girls commented Dr, Ivy Turnbull, Chair of the National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network. Service models created by Black women at the forefront of the HIV epidemic are being implemented to address the COVID-19 pandemic. These community-based service providers must be supported and sufficiently resources to enable them to maintain and expand the service models created to address HIV and COVID-19.”

The National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network, Inc., recognizes and honors the work of all Black women across the country engaging in the battle against HIV and COVID-19 in Black communities. We particularly take this opportunity to showcase the efforts of Debra Fraser-Howze, Chair Emeritus and founder of Choose Healthy Life, a faith-based initiative designed to provide awareness and education on COVID-19, testing, vaccines and infrastructure to underserved Black communities in New York, Newark, Atlanta, Detroit and Washington, DC. Nancy Kingwood, Executive Director of GBAPP in Bridgeport Connecticut, who launched a social marketing campaign to inform and educate the community about COVID-19, resources, and the COVID-19 vaccines and incorporated COVID-19 Community Ambassadors into the existing local HIV service delivery system. Dr, Bambi Gaddist, Executive Director of the Wright-Wellness Center who serves as a COVID Prevention Network Faith Ambassador in partnership with the **COVID-19 Prevention Network (CoVPN)** charged with implementing a faith-focused COVID-19 and CoVPN education program to enhance trust and meaningful engagement in key communities in South Carolina. Janet Kitchen, Executive Director of Positively U, a community-based organization created by and for persons living with distributes food packages in resource deserts and HIV conducts educational community events focused on reducing HIV and COVID-19 in the most impacted communities in central Florida.

These exceptional women are leading and actively contributing to the COVID-19 response on a national, regional, or local level. Their leadership in combatting both HIV and COVID-19 on behalf of the communities they serve is admirable and we applaud their efforts.

The National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network will continue to focus on the leadership of Black women and girls in the fight against HIV and COVID-19. We are committed to working with the Biden Administration to prioritize issues that will move toward full gender justice and call upon public health departments to create collaborative partnerships with communities-based to address the health needs of Black women and girls impacted by HIV and COVID-19.

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**About the National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network (“Network”)**

The National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network is organized to provide leadership and expertise in the prevention and spread of HIV/AIDS and other health disparities that affect black women and girls nationally and internationally. The mission of the Network is to reduce the burden of morbidity, mortality and stigma of HIV/AIDS and other health disparities associated with gender, social, and economic inequities among Black women and girls.

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