

(Fort Lauderdale, FL) Today, Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-Miramar) made the following statement to mark the 17th Annual National HIV Testing Day, a joint initiative between the National Association of People With AIDS (NAPWA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) aimed at promoting HIV testing.

"There are approximately 1.1 million people living in the United States with HIV/AIDS and an estimated 56,300 Americans are newly infected each year. Furthermore, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than one in five HIV-positive individuals are unaware that they are infected. This is truly alarming.

"I commend NAPWA and the CDC for all their hard work in making National HIV Testing Day a success year after year. We must ensure access to HIV testing that is confidential, rapid, and accurate. Combining the effectiveness of voluntary, routine screening with smart policy can help stem the transmission of, and improve the health outcomes associated with, this virus.

"Routine screening for HIV has been proven to save lives and reduce new infections. That is why I introduced in May the *Increasing Access to Voluntary Screening for HIV/AIDS and STIs Act of 2011*. Among other things, the bill requires Medicaid to cover voluntary screening for HIV/AIDS and other STIs as a mandatory service for all individuals 13 and older. It also provides states with the support they need to cover low-income individuals infected with HIV until Medicaid is expanded in 2014 under the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act*.

"We cannot talk about HIV testing without also addressing access to care. In providing increased funding to the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) in the full-year Continuing Resolution for FY 2011, Congress brought much-needed relief to individuals living with HIV/AIDS who were waiting for antiretroviral treatment and other related services. However, further commitment is needed to bring an end to the ongoing ADAP funding crisis. In fact, Florida continues to lead ADAP waiting lists in 13 states nationwide with 3,581 individuals.

"This National HIV Testing Day, I pledge to continue working with my colleagues in Congress to address barriers to HIV testing and access to care, as well as secure additional funding for ADAP and other national prevention and treatment efforts. I also urge all sexually-active

Americans to get tested and know their status. HIV/AIDS is not just a personal health issue; it is a community health issue and we all have a responsibility to do our part in preventing the incidence and transmission of this disease."

Congressman Alcee L. Hastings serves as Senior Member of the House Rules Committee, Ranking Democratic Member of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, and Democratic Chairman of the Florida Delegation.

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