March 8, 2007

Dear Colleague:

As you may be aware, the latest HIV/AIDS data demonstrate the continued severity of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in African American communities. Although African Americans make up less than 13% of the U. S. population, they account for approximately half of the more than 1 million Americans currently estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS. As the impact of HIV/AIDS on African Americans has grown over time, so have the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) efforts to address it. We are highly committed to reducing the disparities that exist among African Americans, but we realize that we cannot do it alone. We believe that an increased, urgent, and collaborative response among CDC, other federal agencies, public health leaders, and African American community members and influential leaders is necessary to decrease HIV/AIDS among African Americans.

Over the past 18 months, we have consulted with a wide range of African American leaders to develop our heightened response to this devastating epidemic, and make the best use of available resources. As part of our heightened response, we have outlined CDC's plans to intensify programs in the following 4 key areas over the next 3 years:

> (1)   expanding the reach of prevention services;
> (2)   increasing opportunities for diagnosing and treating HIV;
> (3)   developing new, effective prevention interventions; and
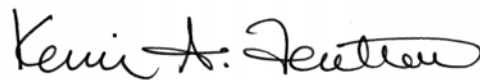> (4)   mobilizing broader community action.

To facilitate this mobilization, we have made available for your use CDC's Heightened Response plan, fact sheets, a *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)* article focusing on HIV trends among African Americans, and other helpful information on the CDC Internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/aa.

We are already seeing growing leadership and momentum in the African American community around the topic of HIV/AIDS prevention. To capitalize on this growing momentum, CDC is bringing African American leaders together to meet in Atlanta on March 8, 2007 to publicly commit to strengthening the national response to the high rates of HIV/AIDS in African American communities.

During the meeting, we will ask African American leaders to make public commitments to intensify their HIV prevention efforts. We hope that this meeting will yield new partnerships and increase opportunities for collaboration among CDC, health departments, community-based organizations, local businesses, the faith community, and nontraditional partners such as media and entertainment groups.

CDC is committed to meeting the public health needs of African Americans and reducing the burden of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in African American communities. Please join us in breaking the silence surrounding HIV—together we can reduce the burden of HIV/AIDS among African Americans. It is imperative that we use our collective voice to encourage everyone to be Aware, Communicate, and get Tested—Act! against HIV.

Sincerely,

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