

March 20, 2014

**Public Health, Medical and Nurse Professionals Urge  
Critical Amendments to Iowa's HIV-related Criminal Statute**

The undersigned organizations urge the General Assembly of the State of Iowa not to move forward with [SF2297](#) (amended by [H8118](#)), legislation to reform Iowa's [HIV-related criminal statute](#), without significant revisions to ensure that the bill accomplishes the goals of de-stigmatizing HIV and other infectious diseases while protecting public health.

[SF2297](#) makes several important improvements to reduce the stigma and discrimination faced by people with HIV under [Iowa's current law](#). However, by retaining the treatment of HIV exposure and transmission incidents as serious felonies, and expanding criminalization to casually transmitted diseases, including tuberculosis and meningococcal disease, the bill treats transmission of these diseases as equivalent to second degree murder, and worse than unintentional manslaughter. Passage of the bill in its present form would represent a significant step back for public health.

The conditions targeted in the bill are poorly understood by the general public and highly stigmatized. Often people with these conditions are not aware of when they are infectious. For example, the proposed legislation now puts individuals with latent as well as active tuberculosis at risk of prosecution because these patients are often not aware when tuberculosis bacteria become active and can be spread to others, and because the failure to wear a mask might be interpreted as intent to transmit.

Expanding the populations subject to criminal prosecution for exposing others to these diseases will fuel stigma and discrimination and further marginalize already vulnerable populations leaving them less likely to seek the medical care necessary to treat the condition and to reduce their risk of transmitting it to others.

We strongly urge Iowa legislators to revisit this proposed legislation and amend it to modify or strike the above-mentioned provisions that undermine rather than strengthen the possible medical and public health benefits of the bill. Please contact us at [policy@HIVMA.org](mailto:policy@HIVMA.org) if we can be of assistance or provide further information.

American Academy of HIV Medicine  
American Thoracic Society  
Association of Nurses in AIDS Care  
HIV Medicine Association  
Infectious Diseases Society of America  
Treatment Action Group