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Contact: Mayo Schreiber, Deputy Director, 212.430.6722

## **Medical, HIV and LGBT Groups Challenge Validity of Missouri's Draconian Criminal HIV Law In Michael Johnson Appeal**

*Friend of the Court Brief Maintains HIV Law Violates the Americans With Disabilities Act and Constitutional Protections Against Irrational Treatment of HIV*

New York NY, April 20, 2016 – The Center for HIV Law and Policy (CHLP), a national leader on HIV policy development, today announced the filing of a friend-of-the-court brief on behalf of Michael Johnson, a former Missouri college student sentenced to more than 30 years for violating Missouri's HIV transmission and exposure statute.

The brief argues that Missouri's criminal HIV law is irrational and at odds with federal law that prohibits singling out a group of people for uniquely punitive treatment based on their identity or health status. Twenty-two national and state organizations joined CHLP on the brief, including the American Academy of HIV Medicine, Human Rights Campaign, Center for Constitutional Rights, Missouri AIDS Task Force and Empower Missouri.

"It is an honor to be part of this effort and to take a stand against a law that is at odds with everything we know about HIV today – how to encourage people to get tested, how to treat it, how it is transmitted, and how to prevent transmission from happening," said Terrance Moore of the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors. Mayo Schreiber, CHLP's Deputy Director and lead on the case, added, "It is hard to believe that laws like this still exist, and that a young person can get the equivalent of a life sentence, as they would for first or second degree murder in Missouri, for a conviction of unintentionally transmitting and exposing willing sexual partners to HIV. When properly treated, HIV is a manageable medical condition that allows for a long life expectancy."

The organizations submitting the amicus brief on behalf of Michael Johnson are:

- AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania
- American Academy of HIV Medicine
- American Civil Liberties Union of Missouri Foundation
- Athlete Ally
- Black AIDS Institute
- Center for Constitutional Rights
- Center for HIV Law and Policy
- Counter Narrative Project
- Dr. Jeffrey Birnbaum
- Empower Missouri
- GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders
- GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality
- Grace
- Human Rights Campaign
- Missouri AIDS Task Force
- National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors
- National Black Justice Coalition
- National Center for Lesbian Rights
- National LGBTQ Task Force
- One Struggle KC
- Treatment Action Group
- William Way LGBT Community Center
- Women With A Vision

Attorneys Avram Frey and Lawrence Lustberg of the national law firm, Gibbons P.C., working with Executive Director Catherine Hanssens of CHLP, led the drafting of the brief. Anthony Rotherth of the American Civil Liberties Union of Missouri Foundation is serving as local counsel.

To view the brief online, visit: <http://hivlawandpolicy.org/resources/state-missouri-v-michael-l-johnson-amicus-brief-missouri-court-appeals-aids-law-project>

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**The Center for HIV Law and Policy** is a national resource and advocacy organization working to advance the rights of people affected by HIV. We combine an online HIV Policy Resource Bank, a creative national advocacy agenda and case assistance focused on systems and institutions with significant impact on marginalized communities.

The Center for HIV Law and Policy • 65 Broadway, Suite 832 • New York, New York 10006  
212-430-6733 phone • 212-430-6734 fax • [info@hivlawandpolicy.org](mailto:info@hivlawandpolicy.org) • [www.hivlawandpolicy.org](http://www.hivlawandpolicy.org)