



February 24, 2015

House Committee on Judiciary
State of Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

**Re: Opposition to House Bill No. 5245 (“An Act Relating to Criminal
 Offenses – Criminal Transmission of HIV”)**

Dear Leadership and Membership of the House Committee on Judiciary:

We write in strong opposition to [House Bill No. 5245](#) on behalf of the Steering Committee of the Positive Justice Project (PJP), a national coalition working to end HIV criminalization – the use of the criminal law to prosecute and penalize people living with HIV for conduct that would be legal if they did not get tested or know their status.

PJP includes people living with or at great risk of HIV, medical and public health professionals, community organizers, law enforcement officials, and others. PJP’s membership includes hundreds of individuals and organizations, such as the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD), the HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA), the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANAC), HIV Prevention Justice Alliance (HIV PJA), and the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS, Inc. (NBLCA), and The Center for HIV Law and Policy (CHLP).

Medical experts and public health officials agree that criminalizing the conduct of people living with HIV does nothing to decrease the rates of infection and may actually deter conduct and decisions that reduce disease transmission. Consequently, the [American Medical Association](#), [HIVMA](#), [ANAC](#), and [NASTAD](#) all have urged an end to the criminalization of HIV and other infectious diseases. Notably, the U.S. Department of Justice recently issued a “[Best Practices Guide to Reform HIV-Specific Criminal Laws](#)” providing technical assistance to states to ensure an end to felony prosecutions of people living with HIV.

A bill that proposes the criminalization of HIV is at direct odds with the growing national consensus: public health problems are not solved with criminal justice responses. PJP strongly opposes the bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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