

The Honorable XX
Attn:
ADDR1
Washington, D.C. 20515

XX February 2006

Dear Congresswoman/man XX,

We the undersigned would like to express our deep concern with the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) decision to remove a website, hosted by the Department's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA), that sought to provide basic preventative health information to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals. As a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, you have direct oversight of SAMSHA's work and, in this capacity, we urge you to stop this censorship of vital preventative health information.

For years, SAMHSA made available website content that focused on providing basic yet critical resources to educators, health professionals, and gay and lesbian Americans. The website covered educational information on topics such as substance abuse, youth suicide, ethnic and cultural diversity, social support, violence prevention, and homophobia. However, in January 2006, just eleven days after the Family Research Council (FRC) launched an attack on the website, SAMHSA completely removed the information and took down the website without explanation. Apparently, in order to appease a small group of anti-gay forces, HHS decided to suppress a vast amount of simple, medically accurate, preventative health information that addressed the needs of lesbian and gay Americans, their families, and their healthcare providers.

SAMHSA's stated mission is to "build resilience and facilitate recovery for people with or at risk for substance abuse and mental illness." Its vision is "a life in the community for *everyone*," (emphasis added). Regrettably, HHS already has a history of insensitivity towards preventative health needs of the LGBT community. For example, its www.4parents.gov website originally provided no advice to parents of teens questioning their sexuality except to see "a family therapist who shares your values," and continues to use biased language such as calling gay and lesbian individuals members of a "lifestyle." The decision by HHS to remove the SAMHSA website is yet another affront to the lesbian and gay population and the healthcare providers that serve them.

We respectfully seek an explanation from HHS regarding the rationale behind the decision to take down the website. More importantly, we seek the restoration of the website as soon as possible, and a commitment to medically accurate, preventative health information for LGBT Americans. We sincerely urge you to join Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin in her letter requesting that HHS stop censoring this important health information. Please contact Shawn Chang or Elizabeth Pika in Congresswoman Baldwin's office (5-2906) to join her effort.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth
AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts
AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth & Families
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
The AIDS Institute
AIDS Project Los Angeles
AIDS Resource Council, Inc. (Rome, GA)
AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland
American Academy of HIV Medicine
American Medical Student Association
Americans for Safe Access/HIV-AIDS Survivors Union
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals (ARHP)
Bienestar (Los Angeles, CA)
Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)
The Center for HIV Law and Policy
Center for Women Policy Studies
Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project (CHAMP)
Council of Religious AIDS Networks
Dignity/ USA National HIV-AIDS Project
Empire State Pride Agenda
Family Planning Advocates of New York State
The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)
Gay Men's Health Crisis
Gender Education & Advocacy, Inc.
Harm Reduction Coalition
Health People (Bronx, NY)
Healthy Black Communities, Inc.
Healthy Teen Network
Hepatitis C Action and Advocacy Coalition (HAAC)
HIV Medicine Association
Human Rights Campaign (HRC)
Jersey City Connections, Inc. / HudsonPride
The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center (New York, NY)
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Community Center of Greater Cleveland
Lifelong AIDS Alliance (Seattle, WA)
Living Room, Inc. (Atlanta, GA)
Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Center
Mautner Project, the National Lesbian Health Organization
National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD)
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA-US)
National Association of Social Workers
National Coalition for LGBT Health
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Women's Health Network
National Women's Law Center
National Youth Advocacy Coalition
New York AIDS Coalition
North General Hospital, Department of HIV/AIDS (New York, NY)
Ohio AIDS Coalition
Our Bodies, Our Selves
Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Planned Parenthood of South Central New York, Inc.
Q FORCE, Columbia College (Chicago, IL)
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC)
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice of Southern California
Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing
R.U.1.2? Queer Community Center (Burlington, Vermont)
SafeGuards LGBT Health Resource Center, a project of the Family Planning Council
(Philadelphia, PA)
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS)
The Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality
Student Global AIDS Campaign
Title II Community AIDS National Network (TII CANN)
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
Whitman Walker Clinic (Washington, D.C.)
Women of Reform Judaism
The Woodhull Freedom Foundation