

# An Exchange of Letters on AIDS

January 13, 1989

The Honorable George Bush  
Vice-President of the United States  
and President-Elect  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20501

Dear President-Elect Bush,

On World AIDS Day (December 1-2) in Boston, Massachusetts, approximately 500 health care professionals, hospital attorneys, policy makers, advocates for persons with AIDS, and academics gathered to explore and discuss issues relating to health care professionals and AIDS. The attached material will give you an idea of both the scope of the program, the level of accomplishment and involvement represented by the conference faculty, and the variety of professional and para-professional attendees.

Following an intense and highly productive two day meeting, the participants unanimously called for a resolution to be formulated so as to communicate to you and to your staff the enormity and critical nature of the problems presently facing our health care system.

We urge you to fulfill your welcome call for a "kinder and gentler" nation with respect to the AIDS epidemic and to do so by: (1) following through on your support for a federal statute safeguarding confidentiality and anti-discrimination; (2) demonstrating your commitment to meeting the social and physical needs of persons with AIDS, their families and significant others, their caretakers, and the research community which is working feverishly to improve their lot; (3) including in

your next budget appropriate funding to improve the research, care and education effort; and (4) meeting publicly with persons and organizations at every level of the AIDS battle to show your support for both those with AIDS and those who dedicate themselves to their care.

We represent a diverse group, yet we stand united in both our desire to support you in providing resources for AIDS research and treatment, and legal safeguards against discrimination.

Your leadership in the war against AIDS is critically needed to promote research, instill compassion, and extinguish irrational fear.

Sincerely,

Myron Essex

on behalf of the Harvard AIDS  
Institute

Larry Gostin

on behalf of the American Society  
of Law & Medicine

Margaret Hardy

on behalf of the American  
Hospital Association

Joan Rachlin

on behalf of Public Responsibility  
in Medicine & Research

Mervyn Silverman

on behalf of the American Founda-  
tion for AIDS Research

Bailus Walker

on behalf of the American Public  
Health Association

April 21, 1989

Mr. Lawrence O. Gostin  
Co-Chair, Hospitals, Health Care  
Professionals and AIDS Conference  
Harvard University,  
School of Public Health  
Boston, MA 02215

Dear Larry:

This is in response to your letter dated January 13 to President Bush.

In his comments at the recent swearing in ceremony for Dr. Louis W. Sullivan, the new Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), President Bush reiterated his concerns about the continuing spread of the AIDS virus and his commitment to continuing the battle against the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) epidemic. Reaching out to all those whose lives have been affected by this disease and working to prevent others from becoming infected, is an important public health objective of the Administration.

Recently, Mrs. Bush expressed her rededication to the battle against AIDS by visiting Grandma's House, in Washington, D.C., one of the first residences created to care for infants infected with HIV. She remarked during her visit, "There is a need for compassion."

AIDS is a top public health priority of this Administration. President Bush has on several occasions expressed his concern about discrimination against HIV-infected persons that "I abhor discrimination against innocent people. . . and would hate for a grandchild of mine who got [an AIDS infected] blood transfusion to be discriminated against." Moreover,

the Administration has asked Congress to provide the Public Health Service with \$1.6 billion for AIDS-related research and education/prevention programs in fiscal year 1990. Total DHHS spending—including direct health care financing costs—is expected to be \$2.5 billion in fiscal year 1990.

Recent advancements in drug research promise the development of many new drugs to fight HIV infection and the opportunistic diseases that take advantage of the body's weakened immune system. New Food and Drug Administration regulations are reducing the time required for human testing of drugs for life-threatening and severely debilitating diseases, like AIDS. The availability of community-based

clinical trial programs in communities serving traditionally underrepresented segments of the population will enable many more persons with AIDS to benefit from these experimental programs.

The Health Resources and Services Administration, along with the Health Care Financing Administration, is making services and funding available at the community level, and the Centers for Disease Control is funding grants for community-based education and information campaigns.

In fact, it is at the community level that information, education, treatment services, and all the other AIDS-related activities can be most effective. It will take the effort of all of us in the Public Health Service

along with those who, like yourself and other members of the planning committee for the conference on "Hospitals, Health Care Professionals and AIDS," are concerned citizens, to eradicate the threat of HIV infection and AIDS.

We applaud the American Society of Law & Medicine, Public Responsibility in Medicine & Research and the Harvard AIDS Institute for sponsoring an informative conference relating to health care professionals and AIDS, and for your continued efforts in the battle against AIDS.

Sincerely yours,

James R. Allen, M.D., M.P.H.  
Acting Director  
National AIDS Program Office