



National Coalition for LGBT Health

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

AIDS Action Foundation
The AIDS Institute
AIDS Project Los Angeles
American Psychological
Association
Bisexual Foundation
Boston Public Health
Commission
Brady East STD Clinic
Bronx Lesbian and Gay Health
Resource Consortium
Callen-Lorde Community
Health Center
Chase Brexton Health
Services, Inc.
Chicago Department of Health
Fenway Community
Health Center
Gay and Lesbian Medical
Association
Gay Men's Health Crisis
GLBT Health Access Project
Gender Education
& Advocacy, Inc.
Hartford Gay & Lesbian
Health Collective
Human Rights Campaign
JSI Research and
Training Institute
The Nat'l Latina/o LGBT
Organization - LLEGÓ
L. A. Gay & Lesbian Center
Mazzoni Center
The Mautner Project
Milwaukee LGBT
Community Center
Montrose Clinic
Multnomah County Health
Department
National Coalition of Lesbian
and Feminist Health Projects
National Association of Lesbian
and Gay Addiction
Professionals, Inc.
National Association of LGBT
Community Centers
National Center for
Lesbian Rights
National Youth Advocacy
Coalition
People of Color AIDS
Foundation
Philadelphia Health
Department, AACO
The Renfrew Center Foundation
for Eating Disorders
Tobacco Technical Assistance
Consortium
Training Resource Network
transGenesis Social Services
Whitman -Walker Clinic

Sent via Facsimile and First Class Mail

December 17, 2003

The Honorable Tommy G. Thompson
Secretary of Health and Human Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Mr. Secretary:

On behalf of the National Coalition for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Health, a group representing over fifty organizations around the country committed to improving the health of LGBT communities, we write to express our profound concern about the alleged generation and distribution by the Department of a list of National Institutes of Health (NIH) grants whose worth is being questioned as a result of the criticisms by the Traditional Values Coalition (TVC). The National Coalition, along with its political allies, strongly opposes the politicization of science and the chilling effect that such scrutiny can have on innovative research.


In the beginning of November, articles appeared in major newspapers (such as the *New York Times* and the *San Francisco Gate*) discussing a list compiled by the TVC of NIH research grants that had been deemed to be "offensive." The TVC apparently questioned the public value of this research and submitted the list to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. This list was eventually passed to NIH and resulted in over 100 researchers being called to be questioned about their research. While the exact nature of government involvement in the generation and distribution of the list is unclear, the result of the list's distribution is clear---anxiety, fear, and mistrust among researchers in the scientific community.

Among the researchers who were contacted are colleagues of ours who are doing some of the most important, innovative, and courageous studies on HIV/AIDS, sexually-transmitted diseases, human sexuality, and LGBT health. It is disheartening to see these scientists being subjected to an atmosphere of perceived intimidation. Further, we worry that younger scientists will be wary of proposing innovative research in the fields of sexual health if they fear that such research will be criticized on grounds wholly unrelated to scientific merit. The scientific worth of research is already assessed as part of the NIH grant review process. Such rigorous assessments should be left to the scientific peer-review process (with transparent public input) in awarding grants.

The National Coalition for LGBT Health respectfully asks that you investigate this matter thoroughly and publicly reaffirm the importance of scientific independence and the peer-review process at NIH. A public message from your office, and from the NIH, could reassure the scientific community (as well as the general public) that funding decisions at NIH will continue to be premised on objective peer-review of the scientific merits of projects.

Please do not hesitate to contact us at (202) 797-3516, if you have any questions or would like any further information. Thank you for your time, consideration, and effort.

Sincerely,



A. Cornelius Baker
Co-Chair
Executive Committee



Eugenia Handler
Co-Chair
Executive Committee

Enclosures