



**NATIONAL MINORITY  
AIDS COUNCIL**  
*Building Healthier Communities*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:** Circe J. Gray Le Compte, Director of Communications  
National Minority AIDS Council, 1931 13th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009  
**Telephone:** (202) 234-5120 ext. 309; (202) 352-7240  
**E-mail:** [communications@nmac.org](mailto:communications@nmac.org) \* **Web:** [www.nmac.org](http://www.nmac.org); [www.2008USCA.org](http://www.2008USCA.org)

**April 30, 2008 ~ Washington, DC ~** The National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC) will honor the tenth anniversary of the Minority AIDS Initiative (MAI) during the 2008 United States Conference on AIDS (USCA), set for September 18-21, in Fort Lauderdale, FL, at the Fort Lauderdale Convention Center. The meeting's Luncheon Plenary, on Friday, September 19, will commemorate the past and current work supported by this historic legislation.

Created in 1998 and codified into the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency (CARE) Act reauthorization in 2006, this groundbreaking legislation has saved countless lives by expanding community-based capacity to serve people of color living with HIV/AIDS.

“The MAI has been so important to the organizations that fight on the front lines of the AIDS epidemic every day,” says NMAC Executive Director Paul Kawata. “Without it, they would not have had the resources to improve the quality and availability of care for communities of color affected by HIV and AIDS, and may have had to close their doors for good.”

Since the epidemic began over 25 years ago, HIV/AIDS has had a disproportionate impact on communities of color across the United States. African Americans represent over 50% of all new HIV infections reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) each year, though they compose only 13% of the U.S. population. AIDS is one of the leading causes of death overall among people of African descent, and is the number one killer of black women aged 25-34. Latinos, who account for approximately 20% of all new HIV/AIDS diagnoses reported to the CDC annually, have a rate of infection that is 3 times higher for males and 5 times higher for females than for their white, non-Hispanic counterparts. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and Native Americans/Alaskan Natives also are reporting rising HIV/AIDS rates.

In March 1998, African-American leaders were briefed on the highly disproportionate impact of the disease in their communities. They developed a Call to Action requesting that the President and Surgeon General declare HIV/AIDS a “State of Emergency” in the African-American community. These leaders also testified before the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), urging action on their part.

“For many years, HIV/AIDS treatment and care was focused on gay white men,” says Hayes-Cozier. “But as the proportion of AIDS cases among African Americans surpassed those among whites, we realized we had to address the lack of sufficient HIV/AIDS services in communities of color and give minorities a voice in fighting this epidemic.”

The overall goal of the MAI is to improve HIV/AIDS-related health outcomes for racial and ethnic minority communities disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS. It allows communities to expand local service capacity primarily through minority community-based organizations (MCBOs), to

increase the availability of medications, primary care, support services, and outreach services to communities of color, and support the development of new and innovative programs designed to reduce HIV-related health disparities. In an effort to complement, rather than replace, other federal HIV/AIDS funding and programs, the MAI takes a multi-pronged approach that focuses simultaneously on HIV prevention, care, treatment and research.

On December 19, 2006, President Bush signed the Ryan White Treatment Modernization Act of 2006. This legislation, passed by Congress after an almost two-year process spearheaded by NMAC, made significant changes to the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency Act, including a number of changes in how funds are awarded across the country. The legislation also incorporated the Minority AIDS Initiative (MAI) into the law. While the MAI has been placed in the underlying statute, the purpose of the initiative remains unchanged. The MAI continues to bridge the gap in HIV service delivery by providing services to underserved communities and empowering local community-based providers in efforts to reach high-risk populations that cannot be reached by traditional models.

For more information about the MAI and USCA, please visit [www.2008USCA.org](http://www.2008USCA.org) or [www.nmac.org](http://www.nmac.org); call: (202) 483-6622 or e-mail: [conferences@nmac.org](mailto:conferences@nmac.org). Media inquiries should be directed to (202) 234-5120 or [communications@nmac.org](mailto:communications@nmac.org).

#### **About USCA**

The 2008 United States Conference on AIDS (USCA) will take place September 18-21, in Ft. Lauderdale, FL, at Greater Ft. Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center. Since 1997, USCA, the largest annual HIV/AIDS meeting in the United States, has strengthened the domestic community-based response to HIV/AIDS by bringing together professionals from across the country to learn new skills and build partnerships and collaborations.

The conference's extensive selection of over 200 institutes, seminars, workshops and roundtables sessions addressing every aspect of the AIDS epidemic – from nutrition and treatment to prevention and international issues – enables participants to customize their training and networking experiences according to their unique professional needs. To learn more about USCA, visit: [www.2008USCA.org](http://www.2008USCA.org); call: (202) 483-NMAC (6622); or e-mail: [conferences@nmac.org](mailto:conferences@nmac.org).

#### **About USCA's Sponsor, NMAC**

The National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC) has developed leadership within communities of color to address the challenges of HIV/AIDS since 1987. NMAC has furthered this mission by providing a public policy education program; national and regional trainings and conferences; treatment and research programs and trainings; numerous publications; and a website: [www.nmac.org](http://www.nmac.org). The agency also serves an association of AIDS service organizations, faith- and community-based organizations, hospitals, clinics, health departments and other groups assisting people and families. NMAC's advocacy efforts are funded through private funders and donors only. For more information, contact NMAC directly at (202) 483-NMAC (6622) or visit: [www.nmac.org](http://www.nmac.org).

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