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6

Shelf:

3

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 22, 1998 (10:01am)

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**DRUG CZAR AND AIDS CZAR AGREE THAT
PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY MUST BE
BASED ON SOUND SCIENCE**

(Washington, D.C.) -- Barry R. McCaffrey, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, and Sandra L. Thurman, Director of the Office of National AIDS Policy, issued the following joint statement:

Today, America is struggling with not just one epidemic, but with two. Tragically, the twin epidemics of AIDS and drugs are linked and impose devastating costs on individuals, families, and on our society as a whole. Together, we share a strong commitment to improving lives and to saving lives by promoting public health policies that are based on sound science.

We agree that drug treatment is the most effective tool not only in reducing the use of drugs but in reducing the sharing of needles, both of which contribute to the spread of HIV. Unfortunately, despite a 33 percent increase in federal spending since fiscal year 1993, drug treatment is only available for half of those in immediate need. We are strongly united in our desire to do everything that we can to expand the availability of drug treatment for all those in need, and to prevent the further spread of HIV among injecting drug users and people with whom they have sexual contact.

As for needle exchange, Congress has limited the use of Federal funds for sterile needle and syringe exchange projects until (1) the Secretary of Health and Human Services determines that exchange projects are effective in preventing the spread of HIV and do not encourage the use of illegal drugs; and (2) the project is operated in accordance with criteria established by the Secretary for preventing the spread of HIV and for ensuring that the project does not encourage the use of illegal drugs. The Office of National Drug Control Policy and the Office of National AIDS Policy remain dedicated to working with Secretary Shalala, and to supporting her efforts to ensure that public health policy is guided by sound science.

Office of National AIDS Policy

Executive Office of the President



URGENT: "AIDS" "Needles" "Congress"

For Immediate Release
October 31, 1997

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**White House AIDS Czar Praises, Challenges Congress on Needle Exchanges;
Hails Conference Committee Vote to Retain HHS Secretary's Power
To Remove Restriction on Funding of Needle Exchange Programs**

**"Let Science Drive this Policy," Urges Sandra Thurman
"New Public Opinion Poll Should Help."**

Programs Underway Show Cut of HIV Infection Rate & No New Drug Users

(Washington, DC) ----Sandra Thurman, the White House AIDS Policy Director, today congratulated and challenged the House and Senate after conferees voted late last night to preserve the power of the Secretary of Human Services to removed current restrictions on federal funding of needle exchange programs. There are more than 100 such programs across the nation. All studies of needle exchange programs have shown that they reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS without encouraging drug abuse.

Thurman, the principal policy advisor to President Clinton on HIV/AIDS said, "It took genuine political courage for members of Congress to let science drive this policy and I challenge them to move forward in that spirit."

A floor vote in both houses is expected soon.

"The results of the new Harris poll, which shows that 71 percent of the American people support removing current restrictions on Federal funding for needle exchange programs should help some members of Congress to remember to keep politics out of public health considerations," Thurman said in a statement released by her office.

"With last night's vote, the debate on this issue has turned a significant corner. In this bill, Congress began the process of defining essential elements of needle exchange programs worthy of federal funding. Bi-partisan support for moving forward is based on a willingness to follow the science, but it took some old fashioned guts for the lawmakers to ignore those who would play politics with this issue. What we are talking about here is simple: if the science says needle exchange programs slash HIV infection rates and don't encourage drug use, then that translates into lives saved.

"We know that there are those who are committed to stopping needle exchange programs and they are expected to try to do so legislatively over the next six months. But when you consider that the American Medical Association, the American Public Health Association, the American Bar Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics all endorse needle exchanges as a proven method for attacking the spread of this deadly disease, few questions should remain about what is good public health policy, and we will continue to explain the facts to anyone who will listen.

"Over the next several months, I will be urging Congress to continue to act based on the scientific facts and not out of ignorance or fear." ###