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**First-of-Its-Kind HIV and Advocacy Needs Assessment Launches on
National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day**

DALLAS, TX (February 7, 2020) – The Southern Black Policy & Advocacy Network (SBPAN) releases a first-of-its kind HIV advocacy needs assessment in conjunction with National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day.

The report brings together often-disparate data sets in order to provide a more complete picture of HIV and advocacy needs for Black communities in the South than ever before.

The report, entitled *HIV Advocacy Needs Assessment: Health Policy and Advocacy Opportunities for Black Communities in the South*, includes cross-comparisons of:

- Statewide HIV prevalence rates;
- HIV care continuum data;
- [Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program](#) data—the largest federal HIV program and the administrator of the nationwide AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP);
- Medicaid expansion;
- Statewide pre-exposure prophylaxis ([PrEP coverage](#))—the HIV prevention medication that can reduce HIV transmission by up to 97 percent;
- community mobilization and advocacy perceptions and opportunities; and
- the Black public health workforce.

The [Ending the HIV Epidemic: A Plan for America](#) is a 10-year U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) initiative that seeks to reduce the number of new HIV infections in the U.S. by 75 percent within five years and by at least 90 percent within 10 years. All nine states included in SBPAN’s report have priority EHE Phase 1 jurisdictions, meaning they are among the communities in the U.S. most heavily impacted by HIV. This report highlights the necessity for “*A Plan for America*” that is responsive to the realities of Black communities in the South who are most affected by the HIV Epidemic.

“Too often data is insufficient in enabling real comparisons,” says Venton Hill-Jones, Chief Executive Officer of SBPAN, “so we sought to fill this knowledge gap. The Ending the HIV Epidemic: A Plan for America (EHE) work really necessitates a localized approach to improve health outcomes. With this document, we are ensuring that communities have this incredibly timely and important information that they need in order to make their EHE plans and, ultimately, advance the end of HIV in the South.”

The [U.S. South](#) accounts for 51 percent of new HIV cases annually despite representing just 38 percent of the U.S. population. The region also experiences higher HIV-related deaths as well as a host of other health disparities, barriers to care, and un- or under-

tapped opportunities. Black people in the South are the most disproportionately impacted in every transmission risk group, accounting for 53 percent of new HIV diagnoses.

“In addition to its data, our report is very centered on the Black experience and making information on Black communities in the South accessible. It details what it will take for Black communities to mobilize—which is necessary to get at the root causes of these health inequities and their continual perpetuation,” says Hill-Jones. “Our hope is that this document will educate and embolden individuals no matter their previous advocacy experience to become more involved, more interested, and more engaged.”

Through the Southern Black HIV/AIDS Advisory Council, SBPAN worked with a diverse body of advocates, community-based organization (CBO) leaders, public health professionals and persons living with HIV across all nine states represented in the report. This is a first step in building out a broader advocacy network focused on Black communities in the South, and advancing not only HIV but also other health and workforce disparities.

Hill-Jones left Washington, DC to return to his southern roots and launch SBPAN so that efforts like the *HIV Advocacy Needs Assessment: Health Policy and Advocacy Opportunities for Black Communities in the South* could be possible. “I came back to the South because I saw both the overwhelming need, as well as timing that suggested that real change was possible,” explains Hill-Jones.

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The Southern Black Policy & Advocacy Network is a Black indigenous health policy and advocacy organization focused on improving health outcomes and reducing social and economic disparities impacting Black communities living in the U.S. South.