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September 24, 2024

Via email to [SKEllis@glaad.org](mailto:SKEllis@glaad.org)

Dear Ms. Ellis,

In a September 12, 2024 press release announcing the release of GLAAD's 2024 [State of HIV Stigma Report](#), GLAAD reports "*For the first time in five years, GLAAD's State of HIV Stigma report **found a statistically significant decline of HIV stigma in the U.S.***" You are also quoted personally: "*The state of HIV stigma in America could not be more clear: **stigma is finally on the decline ...***"

The message that HIV-related stigma is "*finally on the decline*" and GLAAD "*... found a statistically significant decline of HIV stigma in the U.S...*" is without any basis in the online research GLAAD conducted.

Your online survey did find a slight drop (from 89% to 85%) in the number of digitally-accessible Americans *who believe HIV stigma exists*.

Measuring Americans who believe stigma exists is very different from measuring stigma as experienced by the stigmatized.

We are disappointed that GLAAD, an organization founded specifically to combat HIV stigma, has dishonored its legacy by promoting a falsehood that dangerously downplays the reality of HIV-related stigma. We are also disappointed with your reference to "a deafening silence" in a negative context, as that is a classic example of ableist stigmatizing language.

GLAAD's definitive announcement that HIV stigma is lessening harms the efforts of those who work to reduce the stigma, discrimination and criminalization that is a part of the daily lives of so many PLHIV. Living in constant fear of losing our employment, housing, health care, relationships, standing in our communities, custody of our children, or even of being arrested, remains an ongoing reality.

GLAAD's press release and your statement feed a false narrative that HIV stigma is a thing of the past (not unlike the false narrative many once believed that HIV criminalization was in the past). This misconception is dangerous.

GLAAD's press release will make it more difficult to convince policy, political and community leaders, as well as funders and service providers, to effectively address stigma. One prominent activist advised, "our legislators would jump to use this report as an excuse to vote against changing our HIV criminalization statute."

In stigma-related civil rights litigation, it provides ammunition to those asserting stigma doesn't exist or that their actions weren't stigmatizing, as well as makes it more challenging to quantify damages.

If GLAAD is truly committed to measuring HIV stigma, you should start by consulting and engaging with social scientists and researchers who are recognized experts in this field, as well as national and regional networks of PLHIV, including the U.S. PLHIV Caucus.

GLAAD could also look to the People Living with HIV Stigma Index, co-led by the International Network of Women Living with HIV (ICW), the Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+) and UNAIDS, with academic partners from Johns Hopkins University, to better understand how to accurately measure HIV stigma. The People Living with HIV Stigma Index has been implemented in more than 100 countries around the world, including in several parts of the United States.

Or GLAAD could look to the largest survey of transgender people as a model, as that project has engaged academics and experts, as well as the community organizations and networks of those most directly affected.

Instead, you have produced an attention-seeking press release stunt, without supporting evidence, that harms the efforts of PLHIV, affected communities, researchers, and funders seeking to make the U.S. safer for those living with and affected by HIV.

GLAAD's lack of connection and communication with PLHIV networks and recognized HIV stigma researchers betrays an arrogance, as though GLAAD is operating in any alternative universe with no accountability to community members.

It is ironic that GLAAD's proclamation that there is a "statistically significant" decline in stigma was released the same week that JD Vance, the Republican candidate for Vice President, made false statements about Haitian Immigrants in Ohio that are rooted in Anti-Blackness and AIDS-phobia.

The undersigned demand that if GLAAD continues its State of HIV Stigma Report next year, it must substantively involve PLHIV networks and recognized HIV stigma researchers and experts to formulate a survey that more accurately measures HIV stigma.

Signed,

Advocates for Youth

AIDS Foundation Chicago

AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania

All Under One Roof LGBT Advocates of SE Idaho

Arkansas HIV Reform Coalition

Baton Rouge AIDS Society

Beyond Our Status

Cares Sexual Wellness Services

Carry the Message

Desiree Alliance

Evolve Tampa Bay

Grace House

Gran Varones

Health GAP

Health Not Prison Collective

HIV Justice Network

HIV Law & Policy Advocate - TN

HIV Modernization Movement Indiana

HIV/AIDS Alliance of Michigan

Holy Angels National Catholic Church

HPO Consulting

Idaho Coalition for HIV Health and Safety

International Community of Women Living with HIV North America

Latin x. Love Alive International Sanctuary of Praise Center

Latino LinQ

Latinx+

Louisiana Coalition on Criminalization and Health

Movimiento En Respuesta Al VIH inc.

My Fabulous Disease

National Working Positive Coalition

Ohio Health Modernization Movement

Peer Connect

Pennsylvania HIV Justice Alliance

Positive Change Movement

Positive Coalition Project

Positive Iowans Taking Charge (PITCH)

Positive People

Positive People Network Inc.

Positive Women's Network-USA

Poz Haven Foundation, Inc

POZ Impact

PrEP4All

Prevention Access Campaign

Rural Women's Health Project

Sero Project

The 6:52 Project Foundation, Inc.

The Center for HIV Law and Policy

The Counter Narrative Project (CNP)

The Cranky Queer Guide to Chronic Illness

The Sankofa HIV Initiative

The Well Project

Transgender Law Center

U.S. PLHIV Caucus

Under My Skin

Unity Arc Advocacy Group

Valley AIDS Council

We the Positive South

Woodhull Freedom Foundation