

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

HIV BILL SHOULD NOT CRIMINALIZE HIV TRANSMISSION

Kampala, Uganda – Civil Society Organizations working on the HIV Prevention and Control Bill of 2010 Today take a stand to ask parliamentarians to affirm and support the Health committee's report on proposed deletion of ***Mandatory Testing for HIV, Mandatory Disclosure of HIV status*** from The HIV Bill. We also wish to express disapproval of Parliament's move to pass a law providing for provisions on ***Criminalization of intentional transmission of HIV/AIDS***.

These provisions are particularly problematic because they undermine public health efforts to respond to the HIV epidemic in Uganda today. It is estimated that 1.5 million Ugandans (1.4 million adults and 100,000 children) are living with HIV and that at least 140,000 get infected annually (Uganda AIDS Indicator Survey, 2012).

If the Bill is passed with provisions for *Mandatory Testing for HIV for pregnant mothers and their partners and Mandatory Disclosure of HIV status to affected people*, the burden to curb the epidemic is laid on Persons who have tested and are aware of their HIV status unlike those who have not tested for HIV. This may in essence promote fear; domestic violence, raise issues of stigma to know one's status and in essence bury the efforts to fight the disease as no one wants to suffer the consequences of the community identifying him/her as a carrier of the 'disease'.

In providing for criminal provisions for 'intentional Transmission', parliament also risks driving the public into fear from knowing their status. This is because if one finds out their status, they are at risk of being labeled 'criminal' in instances where sexual offences are concerned. This is because having HIV/AIDS intensifies the gravity of the punishment should they be found on the wrong side of the law.

Criminalizing transmission is most likely to be counterproductive and futile since HIV is usually transmitted when HIV positive people do not know that they are HIV positive. There is urgent need to reach Ugandans with accurate information, routine HIV testing and to promptly provide HIV positive people with counseling and treatment in order to ensure they remain healthy and do not transmit HIV.

The HIV Prevention and Control Bill of 2010 is on this week's Order paper for parliament for a second reading and eventual debate and passing. For more Information on the Bill and public health concerns it raises, please contact the following; CEHURD at info@cehurd.org /kwagala@cehurd.org, UGANET -Dianah Nanjeho on nanjehod@gmail.com or Dorah Kiconco

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