

Testimony on HIV Home Test Kits  
November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2005  
Food & Drug Administration Hearing

Ladies and gentlemen and members of the Blood Products Advisory Committee, my name is Rev. Richard Cizik, and I serve as the Vice President for Government Affairs of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). I am here today on behalf of our network of churches and ministries from 54 denominations, which touch a service constituency of 30 million people throughout the United States.

The NAE represents fifty years of facilitating Christian unity, public witness, and cooperative ministry among evangelical denominations, congregations, educational institutions, and service agencies in the United States. We have and will continue to provide strategic leadership as evangelicals face an uncertain future.

At the outset of my remarks, let me thank the Advisory Committee and the FDA for offering all parties concerned the opportunity to participate in this timely dialogue on HIV and testing. This is an issue about which I have had a decade-long record of public advocacy and, for the record, have no financial interest in the company, and do not own stock in the company.

Let me be absolutely clear. The position of the NAE today is straightforward on the matter of rapid HIV testing and the need for such testing to be approved for over-the-counter use; empowering individuals to take more control over their health care by knowing their HIV status is critical. To do this, additional testing options, such as the availability of an FDA-approved, over-the-counter, oral-fluid HIV test, which is quick, simple-to-use, and highly accurate, is a must in our fight against the spread of this disease.

The NAE believes that HIV/AIDS represents one of the most pressing public-health problems of our time. Our position is consistent, starting in 1988 when evangelicals challenged public health officials to recognize HIV/AIDS as first and foremost a public health concern. Early on, evangelicals participated in the national debate and favored legislation that would, among other things, require testing, and reporting of those with the disease to local health officials on the same basis as other sexually-transmitted diseases.

Equally important, our public comments are backed up by our action and practice. For example, the NAE encourages pastors to request couples coming to them for marriage to be empowered to know their HIV status and to share the results with each other before marriage. Member churches have embraced initiatives at the community level, which provide ministry to AIDS patients and their families. We act and practice because, with Christian compassion, we offer the hope of Christ's redemption and grace to victims of HIV/AIDS. We cannot permit fear or apathy to prevent us from bringing the life-changing resources of our Christian faith to those who do not know their HIV status, or suffer from the disease.

NAE also believes that legislation and the best efforts of public health officials have their limits. This is why our Christian faith offers hope for the victims of this disease. This faith offers a realistic way of life that will curb the spread of this tragic disease in that our faith calls for chastity before marriage and fidelity in marriage.

Simply stated, it is unconscionable that the number of HIV infections continues to grow. Therefore, it is time to move the HIV prevention debate from well-intended talking points to clear and present action steps. Action steps that include an FDA-approved, over-the-counter saliva HIV test, which is simple to use and delivers rapid results, empowering people to know their status. The NAE joins those who call for the FDA to approve rapid, saliva, HIV testing, for over-the-counter use. Let us learn from our past, embrace today and our differing perspectives, to help change tomorrow.

Testimony on HIV Home Test Kits Continued  
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**Thank you and may God bless us all.**

Submitted by Rev. Richard Cizik,  
Vice President for Government Affairs  
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