

**Testimony on HIV Home Testing
Blood Products Advisory Council Hearing
November 3rd, 2005**

Members of the Council, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Damon Dozier and I serve as Congressional Liaison at the National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC). I am here today to share with you our views regarding the availability of rapid HIV testing over-the-counter.

For perspective, let me briefly outline for you what the National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC) is and from what perspective we come before you today.

Established in 1987, NMAC is the premier national organization dedicated to developing leadership within communities of color to address the challenges of HIV/AIDS. NMAC advocates for increasing federal resources to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic among people of color, and sponsors regional policy and advocacy skills training and technical assistance sessions for minority communities.

To effectively advocate these issues, NMAC holds policy briefings on Capitol Hill; produces policy briefs and newsletters; and works in coalition with other national AIDS groups to promote the interests of people of color. The overall goal of the Government Relations and Public Policy Division (GRPP) of NMAC is to ensure that the voices and perspectives of people of color affected by, and living with, HIV/AIDS are heard and listened to when important legislation and policies are being considered.

GRPP carries out its work by sponsoring the following programs, and providing the resources and activities listed below:

Partnerships & Initiatives

To fulfill its mission, NMAC has instituted initiatives and trainings to develop leadership in communities of color to address the challenges of HIV/AIDS. They also have recognized that to successfully advocate and implement such programs, partnerships would have to be put in place to increase their outreach. Through the Government Relations and Public Policy Division, NMAC has successfully established a series of networks, trainings and policy.

NMAC in Action

NMAC In Action works to inform and promote sound national HIV/AIDS, health and social policies that are responsive to the needs of communities of color. Through this advocacy vehicle, NMAC ensures that the needs and concerns of those most affected by HIV/AIDS are heard on Capitol Hill and in the White House.

The above briefly touches on areas of our work. Now I would like to point out the perspective that brings us here today. It is staggering, but real:

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), between 1.039 and 1.185 million people are HIV positive in the United States, the highest number in history. They also estimate that 25% of people who are infected are unaware of their status.

Although African-Americans are 12 percent of the U.S. population, they account for 40 percent of all AIDS cases since the start of the epidemic and, in 2003, represented half of all new HIV diagnoses. Almost two-thirds of new HIV infections in teens occur among African-Americans aged 13 to 19. HIV was the leading cause of death for African-American women aged 25 to 34 in 2001. In the United States, HIV rates among African-American women are 19 times higher than those of white women and 5 times higher than those of Hispanic women believed to be susceptible to this disease.

This staggering statistic is unacceptable. Think of your children, nieces and nephews, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, friends, because this single data point is exactly that; people and their families who are faced with the real possibility of contracting this disease unless we do more to empower them with all the tools at our disposal.

Your consideration of this issue is not just about data, statistics, and sound bites; it is about lives affected simply because people don't know and don't have access.

The FDA Issues Summary document says it best:

- ✓ *“The test is simple to use compared to other types of HIV tests and earlier versions of rapid HIV tests, suggesting that untrained persons will be able to perform the test properly.”*
- ✓ *“Home-use tests are used at home by untrained persons without the help of a healthcare professional. Most home-use tests, such as tests*

for blood glucose, cholesterol, and pregnancy, are available OTC without a prescription.”

- ✓ *“The test provides highly accurate results for the detection of antibody to HIV within 20 minutes.”*

On the matter before you, NMAC encourages your immediate action to call for the FDA to approve and make available this powerful new option in the fight against the continuing spread of this disease. BPAC has our support and commitment to assist in any way as the process goes forward.

I would please ask that a copy of my remarks be inserted into the record.

Thank you for your time.