

**Testimony on HIV Home Testing
Blood Products Advisory Council Hearing
March 10, 2006**



Members of the Council, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Philip A. Hilton. I serve as Senior Vice President for Special Projects and as Special Assistant to the President/CEO at the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS, Inc. (NBLCA). Thank you for the opportunity to express our views on the matter before you today and for your willingness to listen. We are here today with an urgent message of support for the immediate availability of an FDA-approved, simple, rapid, saliva HIV test that is made available over-the-counter.

Now, if you will permit me, I would like to take a few minutes and brief you on my organization.

The National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS (NBLCA) was founded in 1987. The NBLCA's mission is to inform, coordinate and organize the volunteer efforts of indigenous Black leadership, including clergy, elected officials, medical practitioners, business professionals, social policy experts, and the media, to meet the challenge of fighting HIV/AIDS in their local communities.

We conduct policy, research and advocacy on HIV and AIDS to ensure effective participation of our leadership in all policy and resource allocation decisions at the national, state and local levels of communities of African descent nationwide. We are the oldest and largest not-for-profit organization of its kind in the United States.

We are establishing affiliates in 17 cities throughout the United States where communities of African descent are hardest hit by the HIV/AIDS epidemic,

including Hempstead (Nassau County, NYS), Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo, Newark, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, Atlanta, Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago, Miami, Houston, Los Angeles, and Washington, DC.

We have served thousands of organizations and institutions through community development, technical assistance, and formulation of public policy; helped to raise over \$1 billion in new federal funding for HIV/AIDS and public health-related direct service organizations serving communities of African descent; created the first programs for the Black clergy to develop strategies to address the complexity of problems caused by HIV and AIDS.

We also serve as chief consultant on HIV/AIDS and public health-related issues to numerous national organizations. Among them are our partnerships with the Congressional Black Caucus and its official partnerships with the National Association of Black Social Workers, the National Caucus of Black State Legislators, representing over 500 Black state elected officials, and the National Baptist Minister's Convention with a membership of 8.2 million. We have proudly served as an advisor on HIV/AIDS-related issues to the United Nations and to the nations of Gabon, Central African Republic, Uganda, and the Bahamas, among others.

We are led under the direction of Debra Fraser-Howze who brings more than two decades of personal leadership and experience to this debate. In June 1995, Mrs. Fraser-Howze was appointed by then-President Bill Clinton to the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS (PACHA). She served on the Council until her tenure ended on July 31, 2001. As you may know, the Council's

mission is to provide advice, information and recommendations to the President of the United States regarding programs and policies to promote effective HIV prevention, advance research on HIV and AIDS, and promote quality services to persons living with HIV and AIDS. The Council was the first national body established to solely and directly advise a President on this issue.

Prior to her founding presidency at the NBLCA, Mrs. Fraser-Howze served as Director of Teenage Services at the New York Urban League, specializing in teenage pregnancy. During her tenure, she increased the agency's annual program portfolio for youth and families at-risk by \$5 million. The programs she developed and implemented sent hundreds of young people back to work or school and taught them to become responsible parents and productive members of society. Mrs. Fraser-Howze was also a Legislative Assistant to The Honorable Charles B. Rangel (D-NY), United States Member of Congress, from 1983-84 while a National Urban League Fellow assigned to Washington, D.C.

Mrs. Fraser-Howze has been recognized for her local, national, and international leadership to communities of color regarding teenage pregnancy, social welfare, and HIV and AIDS. Through her advocacy, African-Americans and other peoples of color have gained greater inclusion in local and national policy, planning, research, and clinical trials. Her ability to develop solutions and build effective coalitions to address major issues effecting communities of African descent have been recognized worldwide. Her counsel has been sought by governments from around the globe, including Barbados, Bermuda, Gabon, Jamaica, and Uganda.

With the above as our base of experience and leadership on the issue of HIV/AIDS in communities of color, our message on the matter of whether to support approving rapid HIV testing for home use is:

The NBLCA stands with those, such as the National Minority AIDS Council, the National Association of Evangelicals, the Latino Commission on AIDS, the AIDS Institute, and others, who strongly support approval. There is no reason why empowering Americans with this rapid HIV testing option is not available today. This technology has been available for years in public health communities, hospitals, and physicians' offices. It is simple, safe, and effective. Those of us in the community who choose to be empowered to know our HIV status ought to have the ability to do so.

We ask that a copy of our statement be inserted into the public record.
Thank you for your listening.