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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

World AIDS Day: A Delaware Call to Action

DELAWARE – As we approach World AIDS Day on December 1st, we come together to honor the lives lost to HIV/AIDS, support those living with the virus, and renew our commitment to ending the epidemic in Delaware and globally.

In Delaware, the statistics on HIV/AIDS highlight the ongoing challenges our community faces. Currently, approximately 4,000 people are living with HIV in our state, with about 44% of new infections occurring among gay and bisexual men (men who have sex with men). (Unfortunately, while we know that trans and nonbinary individuals are also disproportionately impacted by HIV, Delaware is not set up to collect this data).

Hope for ending new HIV infections

For several years, Delaware had kept new HIV infections under 100. It is disappointing that we've seen those numbers rise in recent years with over 100 new HIV infections, in 2022, 2023, and quite possibly in 2024.

Despite these challenges, there is hope on the horizon. “We have more tools at our disposal than ever before.” stated David Mariner, Executive Director of Sussex Pride. “Decreasing, and one day ending new HIV infections in Delaware is within our grasp.”

Delawareans have access to:

- **Free PEP and PrEP:** PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis):** PEP is a medication that can prevent HIV from taking hold after potential exposure. PrEP is a medication for people at high risk of HIV. It is highly effective in preventing HIV when taken as directed. PEP and PrEP are now available at State Service Centers and clinics throughout Delaware. PEP and PrEP can also be prescribed and mailed to you for free from telemedicine platforms like MISTR and QCARE. Starting January 1st your pharmacists in Delaware will also be allowed to prescribe PEP and PrEP.
- **Free HIV Testing:** Knowing your status sooner means you can start taking care of yourself sooner, and reduce the risk you will pass HIV on to others. Free confidential HIV testing is available throughout Delaware. Sussex Pride has teamed up with FreeSTDCheck to offer free HIV and syphilis testing at over 20 locations across Delaware (sussexpride.org/posts/testing/). State Service Centers and

community based organizations like CAMP Rehoboth and AIDS Delaware also offer free HIV testing. At home HIV testing kits are also available from the Delaware HIV Consortium.

- **Free Condoms:** Available throughout health departments and community organizations, condoms are a simple yet effective way to reduce the risk of HIV transmission. Wondering where to find free condoms near you? Use this Free Condom Finder widget from the CDC:
<https://npin.cdc.gov/web-tools/condom-finder-widget>

We encourage all Delawareans—especially those at higher risk—to take advantage of these resources. Visit sussexpride.org/hiv to get started. By improving access to preventive measures and treatment options, we can work together to eliminate new HIV infections and enhance the health and well-being of our community.

World AIDS Day serves as a poignant reminder to advocate for those affected by HIV/AIDS and to promote education on prevention. We invite everyone in Delaware to participate in events, to share knowledge within their communities, and help reduce the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS.

David Mariner stated “Let’s work together to make Delaware a place where everyone has the tools and support needed to thrive, free from the impact of HIV/AIDS.”

Sussex Pride will kick things off on November 30th with the Forever Party, at Freddie’s Beach Bar in Rehoboth Beach Delaware. The special night will feature DJ Das Wuff and special performances by Sauvage, Tamia Mykles, Ivy Blue Austin, Lovely, and Xion Duboyz. (details at: sussexpride.org/events/forever)

For more information on HIV AIDS in Delaware visit sussexpride.org/hiv or follow us on facebook at facebook.com/hivdelaware or instagram at instagram.com/hivdelaware.

SUSSEX PRIDE

Sussex Pride works to celebrate, strengthen, and support the LGBTQ+ community in Sussex County and the state of Delaware, working through a social justice lens. We focus on arts & culture, health & wellness, social and support groups, and advocacy for our community. (www.sussexpride.org)