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**Department
of Health**

HIV Advisory Body

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Commissioner

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Executive Deputy Commissioner

September 11, 2019

Johanne Morne, Director
New York State Department of Health, AIDS Institute
Empire State Plaza, Corning Tower
Albany, NY 12237

Dear Ms. Morne,

The New York State HIV Advisory Body (HAB) and its Best Engagement Practice Committee writes this letter of recommendation to propose the development of a NYS Sexual Health Bill of Rights (BoR). As an advisory body to the NYS AIDS Institute, we recognize the importance of good provider and patient relationships to meet statewide goals of ending of the epidemic. Consumers who have poor interactions with providers are less likely to remain engaged in care or connected to HIV prevention and care services. This then becomes a long term and significant barrier to reach ETE goals around PrEP, HIV testing and viral suppression.

A NYS Sexual Health BoR can inform the communication between providers and consumers to assess sexual risk factors, discuss prevention choices, ensure complete understanding of treatment options, and be supported in testing/screening opportunities.

The Best Engagement Practices Committee sees the full and active use of the NYS Sexual Health Bill of Rights as a tool to improve engagement of consumers in important conversations for planning around treatment and prevention efforts. The development of provider guidance to implement the use of the BoR is also recommended to increase its effectiveness to deliver sex positive services and dialogue.

The HAB recognizes and supports the following patient centered key elements for inclusion in a NYS Sexual Health Bill of Rights:

The Right to:

- be treated with dignity, respect and professionalism in health care settings by all providers, staff and volunteers
- receive services designed to meet patient needs and concerns

- be informed of and receive sexual health care plans (verbally and written) in preferred language, literacy level and in an accessible format such as large print
- receive upon request, assistance in completing sexual health assessments
- express concerns and be included in the development of sexual health care plans
- request a patient advocate to discuss concerns about delivered services and receive (verbally and written) procedures to address grievances
- be engaged in sexual health discussions using sex positive language

Accompanying guidance for providers to implement the NYS Sexual Health BoR should include the following:

- Provide a culturally responsive work environment that is inclusive of patients' respective language, beliefs, and sexual health needs.
- Ensure the physical and mental safety of all patients.
- Value each patient and help reduce barriers (emotional, attitudinal, physical) toward good sexual health
- Actively link patients to internal and external service needs

HAB is committed to improving the provider and consumer relationship to ensure that sexual health services are comprehensive and informative for all NYS resident.

We thank you for your anticipated support and attention to this matter.

Respectfully yours,

Kelley Flood
Committee Co-Chair

Luis Freddy Molano, M.D.
Committee Co-Chair

Robert Lopez
Committee Co-Chair

Barbara Raymond
Committee Co-Chair