



April 1, 2015

House Judiciary Committee
The Alabama Legislature
11 South Union Street
Montgomery, AL 36130-2102

Re: Opposition to House Bill 50 (an amendment that increases the penalty for possible or probable transmission of STI's from a Class C misdemeanor to a Class C felony)

Dear Leadership and Membership of the House Judiciary Committee:

We write in strong opposition to [House Bill 50](#) on behalf of the Steering Committee of the Positive Justice Project (PJP), a national coalition working to end the use of the criminal law to prosecute and penalize people living with HIV and other STIs for conduct that would be legal if they did not get tested or know their status. We submit this letter in support of local organizations, communities, and advocates in Alabama that actively oppose this bill that is being considered by the Judiciary Committee.

PJP includes people living with or at risk of HIV, medical and public health professionals, community advocates, law enforcement officials, and others. PJP's membership includes, for example, the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD), the HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA), AIDS United, the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANAC), HIV Prevention Justice Alliance (HIV PJA), the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS, Inc. (NBLCA), The Center for HIV Law and Policy (CHLP), and Lambda Legal.

Medical experts and public health officials agree that criminalizing the conduct of people living with HIV does nothing to decrease the rates of infection, and may actually deter conduct and decisions that reduce disease transmission. Consequently, the [American Medical Association](#), [HIVMA](#), [ANAC](#), and [NASTAD](#) have issued statements urging an end to the criminalization of HIV and other infectious diseases. Notably, the U.S. Department of Justice recently issued "[Best Practices Guide to Reform HIV-Specific Criminal Laws](#)," which counsels states to end felony prosecutions of people living with HIV as contrary to the relevant science and national HIV prevention goals.

The broad national consensus that public health issues are not solved with criminal justice responses is further evidenced in the Positive Justice Project's [National Consensus Statement on the Criminalization of HIV](#). With over 1000 endorsers, this statement reflects the growing awareness that reliance on severe felony criminal laws to deal with a public health issue undermines the effectiveness of prevention and care activities. In order for public health messages to be successful, people need to trust that they will be safe when engaging with services.

For the foregoing reasons, leading members of the Positive Justice Project strongly oppose this bill. Please contact Lauren Fanning, PJP Senior Community Outreach Specialist, at (253) 820-0463 for additional information or to discuss the problems associated with this bill in more detail.

Respectfully submitted,

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