

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 693

Expressing support for the designation of September 9 as “National African Immigrant and Refugee HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis Awareness (NAIRHHA) Day”.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 18, 2023

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia (for himself, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Ms. LEE of California, Ms. ADAMS, Ms. SEWELL, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Ms. WILSON of Florida, Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK, Ms. CROCKETT, Ms. PRESSLEY, Mr. GREEN of Texas, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, and Ms. WILLIAMS of Georgia) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

RESOLUTION

Expressing support for the designation of September 9 as “National African Immigrant and Refugee HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis Awareness (NAIRHHA) Day”.

Whereas the number of African immigrants and refugees living in the United States has increased by 500 percent between 1980 and 2016, and these communities are expected to continue growing at a high rate: United States census data have shown that the population of African immigrants has grown by 71 percent from 2001 to 2016 alone;

Whereas HIV infection rates are 6 times higher in the African immigrant population than in the general United

States population, and are nearly twice those of United States-born Black individuals;

Whereas African immigrants face the highest average chronic hepatitis B rates in the country, with approximately 10 percent of these communities living with hepatitis B;

Whereas HIV and hepatitis B and C are preventable and treatable conditions, and with appropriate attention and focus, health outcomes among African immigrant communities can be improved and lives can be saved;

Whereas the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that individuals born in Africa, or individuals born in the United States who have at least one parent born in Africa, who were not vaccinated at birth, should be prioritized for hepatitis B testing;

Whereas African immigrant communities face significant challenges to HIV and viral hepatitis testing, care, and treatment, and though they have high rates of infection, they have low rates of diagnosis and care;

Whereas challenges to HIV and viral hepatitis testing, care, and treatment include stigma, fear, lack of awareness and knowledge, language barriers, traditional values and social norms, and limited access to health care services, and there also exists a need for providers and services to be culturally and linguistically appropriate to better meet the needs of African immigrants, in keeping with the National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) in Health and Health Care, which describe a framework to deliver services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate and respectful, and that respond to patients' cultural health beliefs, preferences, and communication needs;

Whereas immigration status is also associated with fear of health facilities, low acculturation and unfamiliarity navigating complex health care systems, social and economic marginalization, fear of deportation, and a lower rate of health insurance, all posing considerable barriers to the health of African immigrants and refugees living in the United States;

Whereas NAIRHHA Day is a day aimed toward bringing local and national attention to the health issues of HIV/AIDS and viral hepatitis in African immigrant and refugee populations in the United States, in a way that is culturally and linguistically appropriate, and by addressing some of the unique issues that African immigrants in the United States face through awareness, education, and resources, NAIRHHA Day will help empower communities to take charge of their own health;

Whereas the objectives of NAIRHHA Day include raising awareness and eliminating stigma; education about protection against HIV, viral hepatitis, and other related diseases; placing control back within the community by encouraging screenings and treatment, as well as hepatitis B vaccination; and advocating for policies and practices that promote healthy African immigrant communities, families, and individuals;

Whereas no existing HIV/AIDS awareness day addresses the distinct factors influencing the high rates of HIV and viral hepatitis in African immigrants and refugees, groups which are often overlooked or misclassified as “Black” or “African American” in HIV surveillance programs, due to not collecting or reporting on information about country of origin;

Whereas with the rapid population rise of African immigrants in the United States, it is critical to raise awareness among health care and social service providers and among African immigrant and refugee communities about the risk of viral hepatitis and HIV/AIDS, their potential consequences, and opportunities for prevention, diagnosis, and treatment, and as African immigrants become long-term United States residents, it will be increasingly important to provide screening, prevention, and treatment of chronic and infectious diseases with a culturally sensitive approach;

Whereas building capacity within communities to promote knowledge, treatment, and prevention of HIV and viral hepatitis contributes greatly to the sustainability of the NAIRHHA Day initiative, for, as communities increase their capacity to respond to the “silent epidemics” of HIV and viral hepatitis, they will develop their own resources to continue this work; and

Whereas by encouraging more people to get tested and seek treatment, NAIRHHA Day is aiding those who suffer now and preventing others from contracting these transmissible diseases, and by trying to lessen, if not remove, the stigma behind HIV/AIDS and viral hepatitis, NAIRHHA Day is facilitating community building and communication: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) supports the designation of “National Afri-
3 can Immigrant and Refugee HIV/AIDS and Hepa-
4 titis Awareness (NAIRHHA) Day”;

5 (2) recognizes the importance of dedicating
6 more attention and resources to addressing HIV/

1 AIDS and viral hepatitis in African immigrant and
2 refugee communities across the United States; and
3 (3) encourages a commitment to reducing new
4 viral hepatitis and HIV infections and hepatitis B
5 and C- and HIV-related deaths through more robust
6 screening, vaccination, and linkage to treatment and
7 care in African immigrant and refugee communities.

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