



HIV Advocacy Talking Points

Avoid use of the word "**decriminalization**." All of the messaging research shows that this word REALLY turns people off. We can use the phrase "criminalization reform" but EVEN BETTER is saying that we are seeking to "**modernize HIV-specific laws**."

Below are some top line messages on HIV generally and on criminalization reform more specifically - PLEASE don't hesitate to call me if you have any questions or concerns!! And please direct all media inquiries my way.

Elevator Pitch:

Florida leads the country in the rate of new HIV transmissions. Equality Florida's HIV Advocacy Project was born from the need to address this important public health issue as it still disproportionately affects the LGBTQ community. The project consists of a statewide public education campaign to inform residents of the dangers of stigma, misinformation, and the current Florida outdated HIV-specific laws, which continue to serve as a disincentive for people to seek testing and treatment.

HIV General Talking Points:

- As humans, we all share the desire for some basic things regardless of HIV status. We all want to be able to earn a living, provide for our families, and have live long and healthy lives surrounded by family, friends, and loved ones. It's important to recognize the laws are no longer effective because they never were, in fact they work against public health. These laws discourage people from getting tested and getting into treatment by perpetuating stigma, misinformation, and they threaten the lives of those living with HIV.

-HIV is an issue of racial, economic, and reproductive justice and it is exactly the kind of work Equality Florida is committed to as we fight to secure full equality for ALL Floridians.

-Florida has the highest rate of new HIV transmissions in the country, and current rates show no signs of slowing.

-Ignorance, stigma, and inequality contribute to new transmission cases-- and in Florida there's an abundance of all three.

-Equality Florida's **HIV Advocacy Project**, a new statewide initiative to stop the new transmissions in our state.

-HIV is not exclusive to the LGBTQ community of course - but the reality is that nearly 8 in 10 HIV+ people in America are men who have sex with men.

-Gay, bisexual men and transgender women of color are at a particularly high risk of contracting HIV.

HIV Criminalization Reform Talking Points:

- Florida is one of **32 states** and two US territories has HIV-specific laws.

- These HIV-specific laws work against public health policies, perpetuate the stigma of HIV, and discourage people from knowing their HIV status. People living with HIV (PLWH) can be found criminally liable for up to **30 years in prison** if they do not disclose their HIV status to consensual partners before any type of sexual contact, even if transmission is impossible.

-The law disregards the level of risk of such contact and ignores all biomedical advances that prevent PLWH from transmitting HIV to their partners.

-PLWH who are in treatment become "undetectable", which means there is no detectable virus in their body fluids and they will not be able to transmit HIV.

- The current proposed changes to the law will not make impact prosecution of those who seek to harm others by intentionally transmitting HIV to their sexual partners. In fact, the law clearly states intentional transmission of HIV is illegal.

-It is reassuring to know that there are existing criminal statutes that would apply if a person living with HIV purposely tries to transmit someone by refusing to disclose their HIV status.

-This legislation aims to modernize HIV statutes to bring them up to date with current medical advances in HIV treatment and prevention. It also tackles the current stigma against people living with HIV, as a result it hopes to increase the number people getting tested, treated, and to undetectable status.