

KANAWHA COUNTY COMMISSION

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April 2, 2021

The Honorable Joe Manchin, III
United States Senator
900 Pennsylvania Avenue
Suite 629
Charleston, WV 25302

Re: HIV Cases in Kanawha County

Dear Senator Manchin:

Thank you for your previous efforts to provide funding for HIV prevention and treatment in West Virginia. The Kanawha County Commission appreciates that, because of you, these resources will be available as the Kanawha-Charleston Health Department implements increased HIV testing and prevention programs. We must show compassion for those who have tested positive, and in turn, take steps to protect those who are most vulnerable to HIV exposure.

Taking this matter into consideration, we are highly alarmed by recent press accounts, as well as numerous public statements, declaring that Kanawha County, West Virginia, has the "most concerning" HIV outbreak in the United States of America. If this premise is correct, a sense of urgency is required. These disturbing press reports came after a CDC employee made a presentation to the Kanawha-Charleston Health Department HIV Task Force. It is our understanding the WV Congressional Delegation received this same presentation.

Specifically, the author of the presentation stated, "We want to impress upon you that this outbreak is currently our most concerning in the United States among people who inject drugs." The author's presentation showed that Kanawha County had experienced 51 new diagnosed cases of HIV since January 1, 2019, with 35 of those being in 2020. Further, the author ends his presentation with the following statement, "The findings and conclusions in this presentation are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention." We do not question the author's qualifications or expertise, but we do request clarification of his stated conclusions.

Has the CDC completed an official investigation into the "rise" of HIV cases in Kanawha County? If not, why not? Is the rise the most concerning in the United States of America? Various people have taken positions regarding this issue, but who made the determination, and when was it made?

We are concerned that statements referring to the "HIV outbreak" in Kanawha County as the "most concerning" are being made without factual and empirical evidence. The presentation went as far as to say that the Kanawha County increase is more significant than that seen in New York City. Is there a peer-reviewed evidence-based finding that would support this alarming allegation?



For these reasons, the Kanawha County Commission respectfully asks that your office open a Congressional inquiry to the CDC into this matter. We need your assistance to determine if Kanawha County truly has the "most concerning" HIV outbreak in the United States of America.

Thank you for reviewing this information, and always, thank you for your assistance to Kanawha County.


Sincerely,



W. Kent Carper
President



Ben Salango
Commissioner



Lance Wheeler
Commissioner