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WHITE HOUSE TO ANNOUNCE END OF HIV TRAVEL & IMMIGRATION BAN *“NOW, FAMILIES CAN BE REUNITED,” SAYS IMMIGRATION EQUALITY*

WASHINGTON, DC – Immigration Equality has learned that President Obama will announce the final repeal of the HIV Travel and Immigration Ban, which prohibits people living with HIV from traveling or immigrating to the United States, during a White House ceremony later today. The ban, which has been in effect since 1987, will end following a 60-day waiting period.

“At long last, people living with HIV will no longer be pointlessly barred from this country,” said Rachel B. Tiven, executive director of Immigration Equality. “We are proud to have been part of a tremendous coalition, including Senator John Kerry, former Senator Gordon Smith, and Congresswoman Barbara Lee, who have worked tirelessly to repeal this ban. Every day, Immigration Equality hears from individuals and families who have been separated because of the ban, with no benefit to the public health. Now, those families can be reunited, and the United States can put its mouth where its money is: ending the stigma that perpetuates HIV transmission, supporting science, and welcoming those who seek to build a life in this country. Today’s announcement is proof that immigration laws that separate families and stigmatize communities are always destined to fail.”

In addition to prohibiting entry for HIV-positive individuals, the ban also meant the United States has been unable to host prestigious scientific conferences on HIV/AIDS. Repeal of the ban follows passage of legislation signed by former President George W. Bush and regulatory changes made by the Obama administration.

“Today a discriminatory travel and immigration ban has gone the way of the dinosaur and we’re glad it’s finally extinct,” Senator John Kerry (D-MA) said. “It sure took too long to get here. We’ve now removed one more hurdle in our fight against AIDS, and it’s long overdue for people living with HIV who battle against stigma and bigotry day in and day out.”

Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-CA) also applauded the announcement, telling Immigration Equality that, “I believe that ending this policy is long overdue, and will lend greater credibility to U.S. foreign assistance efforts to fight the global HIV/AIDS epidemic. Particularly, it will aid in combating the stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV, and further erode discriminatory travel and immigration policies in other countries.”

Immigration Equality attorneys say they expect a large volume of calls and emails from individuals impacted by the ban. The organization is offering free and confidential legal counsel to those with questions, who can call (212) 714-2904 for more information.

More details on the ban, and its repeal, are online at www.immigrationequality.org.

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Immigration Equality is a national organization that works to end discrimination in U.S. immigration law, to reduce the negative impact of that law on the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and HIV-positive people, and to help obtain asylum for those persecuted in their home country based on their sexual orientation, transgender identity or HIV-status.