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April 12, 2016

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Hep B United Says New Report on Eliminating Viral Hepatitis in the U.S. Confirms Urgent Need for Increased Resources

Washington, DC – Hep B United, a national coalition to address and eliminate hepatitis B, today welcomed the new report on *Eliminating the Public Health Problem of Hepatitis B and C in the United States* from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, which concluded that hepatitis B and C could both be eliminated as public health problems in the United States if there is the will and resources. This report confirms the urgent need for increased national investment in combating and eliminating the silent epidemic of viral hepatitis.

“The resources to combat viral hepatitis in the United States continue to be severely inadequate, and do not come close to reflecting the burden of disease,” said Joan Block RN, BSN, Co-founder and Executive Director of the Hepatitis B Foundation and Co-Chair of Hep B United. “We must work together to break the silence and make hepatitis B a public health priority.”

Hepatitis B is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV). In the U.S., it is estimated that over 2 million Americans are living with chronic HBV infection, only 25 percent are aware of their infection, and less than 10 percent of infected individuals are able to access care and receive treatment.

“Chronic hepatitis B disproportionately impacts and represents serious public health inequities for racial and ethnic communities in the U.S.,” says Jeffrey Caballero, Executive Director of Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations and Co-Chair of Hep B United. “Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders make up 5 % of the total U.S. population, yet account for more than 50 % of Americans living with chronic hepatitis B.” Left untreated, 1 in 4 of those with chronic hepatitis B infection will die prematurely from liver failure and/or liver cancer.

The report identifies critical factors towards ending transmission of hepatitis B and reducing the morbidity and mortality attributable to ongoing infection, both goals the committee concluded are either highly feasible or feasible. This report is the first of a two-phase study; the second report, to be released in 2017, will outline a strategy for meeting the goals discussed in this report.

Hep B United applauds the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's committee for these comprehensive elimination recommendations and reaffirming the ongoing efforts of hepatitis B coalitions across the country. They align with our collective goals to breakdown barriers like stigma and inconsistent surveillance systems, as well as increase effective strategies to eliminate perinatal hepatitis B transmission and conduct education, screening, vaccination, and linkages to care for those living with hepatitis B.

Eliminating the Public Health Problem of Hepatitis B and C in the United States, prepared by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine is available online at www.nas.edu/HepatitisElimination.

About Hep B United

Hep B United is a national coalition that was created by the Hepatitis B Foundation and the Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations to address the public health challenge of hepatitis B. The goal of Hep B United is to support local community coalition efforts across the U.S. to increase hepatitis B awareness, screening, vaccination and linkage to care for all Americans, but in particular, for high-risk Asian American and Pacific Islander populations who are disproportionately impacted. For more information on Hep B United, please visit <http://hepbunited.org>. To learn more about the regional partner coalitions, please visit <http://hepbunited.org/local-campaigns>.

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