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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thai AIDS campaigners pack 80,000 voices to US's Capitol Hill

Bring messages to the US Government and Americans to help stop unfair drugs' patent terms in the proposed Thailand-US FTA

Bangkok – Three Thai campaigners today talk about their upcoming three week long trip to the US to raise awareness of the impact and threat of the proposed Thai-US FTA on access to medicine for people living with HIV/AIDS and patients diagnosed with cancer and cardiovascular illnesses.

The trip, organised by ENGAGE, a US-based non government organisation, and the Thai Network of People Living with AIDS (TNP+), aims to increase awareness in the US and Thailand that the intellectual property rights (IPR) chapter in the proposed Thai-US Free Trade Agreement (FTA) threatens access to medicines for people living with HIV/AIDS and others who need medicines to treat life-threatening illnesses.

Sangsiri Teemanka, AIDS Access Foundation advocacy officer, says

"I will ask the US citizens from all walks of life to stand up and call on their Government to stop pushing the Thai Government to sign a trade deal that would affect the lives of poor people. At the same time, the Thai Government must protect the rights to health of all Thais and that people are at the heart of the trade negotiation. The terms on intellectual property rights must be removed from the proposed US-Thai FTA.

Jiraporn Limpananont, an academic from Chulalongkorn University, says

"If the intellectual property rights chapter of Thai law is amended to suit the interest of US pharmaceutical companies, the price of the essential drugs will be dramatically increased."

Boripat Donmon, a person living with HIV/AIDS from TNP+, says

"As a Thai person, I have the right to health, a right which enables me to have access to affordable medicine. I will not be able to afford the expensive antiretroviral drugs. It is important that essential drugs for treating poor people living with HIV/AIDS is available, accessible, and affordable to save lives and improve quality of lives."

Departing on Saturday evening, the campaigners plan to meet the US Government officials at Capitol Hill in Washington D.C. The group will also travel to four other states to meet academic, activists, gay rights groups, and farmers groups.

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