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Statement on World AIDS Day 2012

Singapore has much to be proud of in terms of its record in human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection control. However, in spite of this, the number of HIV cases continues to rise, most notably within the gay community. One hurdle that obstructs the urgent and important work in this regard is the continued retention and defence of Section 377A by the state and various influential lobby groups.

Section 377A irrationally criminalises the gay community and needlessly slows down the urgent public health work that needs to be done in order to address HIV control and prevention. It causes some gay people to live in fear and makes them hesitate to get the care and support that they need.

As a result of the constraints placed by Section 377A, the LGBTQ community has to engage in creative calisthenics to disseminate critical healthcare messages. One such project is *Verify* by The Purple Alliance, which is a free and confidential service that provides companions for those who would like some company during the sometimes lonely and anxiety-causing process of health screening. Our team of volunteer companions is made up of highly-trained, friendly and compassionate LGBTQ youth who are either registered nurses or who are professionally trained in healthcare and human sexuality. The service is currently open to youth aged 16-30 regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity, and interested individuals can [book an appointment on the Purple Alliance's website](#). The service won the Take Action 2 contest that was organised by Oogachaga Counselling and Support and sponsored by the Toteboard Community Health Fund.

The Purple Alliance strongly urges a repeal of Section 377A from a public health standpoint in order to facilitate the transmission of critical health information to the gay population. However, besides throwing roadblocks into public health education, Section 377A affects other individuals within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) community by contributing greatly towards maintaining the stigma against them and discourages them from getting legal recourse when faced with issues concerning same-sex sexual and domestic violence, among other things. LGBTQ individuals are prevented from living honestly, are constantly told that their relationships are "less-than" and are made feel like they do not deserve to be treated with dignity, care and respect. They are erased from public consciousness and are consigned to leading their lives in their own segregated spaces. They are regarded as convenient chips in an agenda of economic development.

The Purple Alliance supports the welfare of LGBTQ individuals by empowering real people to share their stories and talents, providing services to support them in leading dignified lives, and helping them communicate. By ensuring that these stories and conversations are shared, we will increase understanding, promote acceptance, and advance equality. We support research concerning LGBTQ issues in Singapore, provide high-quality resources, and are open to working with external groups and interested individuals on projects that support the dignity of LGBTQ individuals and that nurture positive relations with the public.

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