

Greetings I am Stephanie Laster,

Today we are recognizing NATIONAL HIV TESTING DAY which is JUNE 27th every year; this year it falls on Sunday and to make sure no one misses the opportunity to get tested in Metropolitan Atlanta we have testing events taking place all week in all areas of the city.

Today our very own Mayor Reid is supporting our efforts by getting tested himself as well as having this event here at city hall to make sure everyone has an opportunity to know their status, and to reduce the stigma and fear associated with getting tested.

Some folks say silence is golden, I beg to differ! I speak out because I was chosen, chosen to educate my community. I am determined not to let this Virus defeat me or even my worst enemy! They have deemed HIV/AIDS not only as a community disease, but as a black community disease.

So why is it important to know your status? Because saving you is saving me!! The people perish because of lack of knowledge. It is important to know your status because then you will learn that HIV is not a death sentence. There are a people living full healthy lives with it! Early diagnosis and treatment saves lives. Knowing your status is prevention. If you know your status it will help reduce the effects of this epidemic. People who know their status are less likely to transmit the virus to an uninfected person. More than 20 % of people living with HIV don't know they have it. What you don't know can hurt you and our community. Knowing your status saves lives, not just others but your own. I urge everyone to get tested and share the importance of being tested with everyone you know.

Thank You!

Stephanie