



August 2, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

I am thrilled to start my journey in CDC's Division of STD Prevention today. It is an honor to join some of the most dedicated, educated, and hard-working experts committed to improving America's sexual health.

As you've heard from those leading the Division during this transition, we are at a pivotal moment in our field. We are slowly working our way out of the challenges we were presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and working our way into the future of STI prevention. With the first-ever [STI National Strategic Plan](#), we have a roadmap for public health, government, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders to develop, enhance, and expand STI prevention and care programs at the local, state, tribal, and national levels.

CDC programs – both those already in place and those that are yet to get off the ground – are poised to move us forward. For example, the Administration's [historic investment](#) into the disease intervention specialist (DIS) workforce will allow us to better support this invaluable contingent of infectious disease investigation experts. Continued collaborations to better leverage STD clinics in the Ending the HIV Epidemic in the U.S. (EHE) initiative will move us closer to our ambitious HIV and STI prevention goals. At the same time, the STI Plan provides us with an exciting opportunity to collaborate with our colleagues in other disease areas to address the syndemic of STIs, HIV, viral hepatitis, high-risk substance use, and the social determinants of health, which contribute to ongoing health disparities and inequities. And I am particularly excited to continue to support efforts to address health disparities by more equitably distributing access to, and routine use of STI prevention and treatment services. I have dedicated my career to building programs that provide culturally competent prevention and care for gender, sexual, and racial minority groups and I fully intend to continue that work at CDC.

Although the data are staggering and significant challenges persist, I'm hopeful about the future of our field and know that if anyone can overcome them, it's this group of dedicated public health professionals. Thank you for your continued support and I look forward to working with each of you.

Best regards,

/Leandro Mena/

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