

January 22, 2008

The Honorable Harry Reid
S-221 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
S-231 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell:

We are writing as members of the Steering Committee of the HIV Medicaid and Medicare Working Group (HIVMMWG). HIVMMWG is a coalition of 84 national and community-based AIDS service organizations that represent HIV medical providers, advocates and people living with HIV/AIDS and organizations that provide critical HIV-related health care and support services.

We write to encourage you to quickly enact an economic stimulus package that includes a temporary increase in the Medicaid federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) tied to a requirement that states receiving this increase do not enact any new restrictions in Medicaid eligibility or covered services during this period.

Medicaid is the largest source of financing for HIV/AIDS health care services. Because it is also such a major source of state spending, economic downturns inevitably lead to reductions in Medicaid spending. These cutbacks add to an already overstressed health care system and they produce harmful ripple effects that increase pressure on Ryan White-funded programs that sometimes cause people with HIV/AIDS to lose access to medical services, potentially with life or death consequences. Prior to the recent economic downturn, in March 2007, four state Ryan White-funded AIDS Drug Assistance Programs (ADAPs) already had waiting lists, totaling 571 people with HIV who could not gain access to medications, despite meeting eligibility criteria. In recent years, several people with HIV/AIDS have died while on waiting lists for lifesaving HIV/AIDS medications. Any reductions in Medicaid eligibility or new limits on services will increase pressure on Ryan White programs and lead to more people being denied services they need.

New investments in Medicaid are essential to avoid weakening our health system and to protect the stability of health coverage for low-income Americans, including people living with HIV/AIDS. The harmful effects of state cutbacks can be forestalled, as we saw in 2003-2004, when the Congress enacted a modest temporary increase in the federal share of Medicaid costs. This was a highly effective intervention that stimulated economic activity and protected vulnerable individuals. We believe that similar assistance is a crucial part of any economic stimulus package in 2008.

As you may know, the HIV community has other pressing issues on its agenda that will alleviate some of the pressure on the health system and increase the security that people with HIV/AIDS will have affordable access to the lifesaving medications and health services that they need. We hope to work with the Congress to enact Medicare-related provisions to take additional pressure off of the Ryan White program, such as allowing ADAP spending to count as True Out-of-Pocket costs (TrOOP) under the Medicare Part D program. A temporary increase in the

Medicaid FMAP and enactment of Medicare improvements are complementary steps that will improve health care access to persons living with HIV/AIDS and reduce fiscal demands on the critically important discretionary Ryan White program. But they serve different purposes and enactment of one does not negate the need for the other.

As you move forward, we encourage you to promptly enact a temporary economic stimulus package, including critical assistance for state Medicaid programs. This is a critical priority for the HIV/AIDS community. Please contact Laura Hanen with NASTAD at (202) 434-7138 or Robert Greenwald with the Treatment Access Expansion Project at (617) 390- 2584 to discuss this important issue further.

Sincerely,

AIDS Action
AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth & Families
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
The AIDS Institute
AIDS Project Los Angeles
American Academy of HIV Medicine
Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project
Gay Men's Health Crisis
Health and Disability Advocates
HIV Medicine Association
Housing Works
Indiana Minority Health Coalition, Inc.
Lifelong AIDS Alliance
National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors
National Association of People With AIDS
National Health Law Program
National Minority AIDS Council
New York AIDS Coalition
Project Inform
San Francisco AIDS Foundation
Title II Community AIDS National Network
Treatment Access Expansion Project

cc: Majority Whip Richard Durbin
Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus
Senate Finance Committee Ranking Member Charles Grassley
Senate Finance Committee, Health Care Subcommittee Chairman Jay Rockefeller
Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Chairman Ted Kennedy
Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Ranking Member Enzi
Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad
Senate Budget Committee Ranking Member Gregg

January 22, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
H-232 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Boehner
H-204 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader Boehner:

We are writing as members of the Steering Committee of the HIV Medicaid and Medicare Working Group (HIVMMWG). HIVMMWG is a coalition of 84 national and community-based AIDS service organizations that represent HIV medical providers, advocates and people living with HIV/AIDS and organizations that provide critical HIV-related health care and support services.

We write to encourage you to quickly enact an economic stimulus package that includes a temporary increase in the Medicaid federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) tied to a requirement that states receiving this increase do not enact any new restrictions in Medicaid eligibility or covered services during this period.

Medicaid is the largest source of financing for HIV/AIDS health care services. Because it is also such a major source of state spending, economic downturns inevitably lead to reductions in Medicaid spending. These cutbacks add to an already overstressed health care system and they produce harmful ripple effects that increase pressure on Ryan White-funded programs that sometimes cause people with HIV/AIDS to lose access to medical services, potentially with life or death consequences. Prior to the recent economic downturn, in March 2007, four state Ryan White-funded AIDS Drug Assistance Programs (ADAPs) already had waiting lists, totaling 571 people with HIV who could not gain access to medications, despite meeting eligibility criteria. In recent years, several people with HIV/AIDS have died while on waiting lists for lifesaving HIV/AIDS medications. Any reductions in Medicaid eligibility or new limits on services will increase pressure on Ryan White programs and lead to more people being denied services they need.

New investments in Medicaid are essential to avoid weakening our health system and to protect the stability of health coverage for low-income Americans, including people living with HIV/AIDS. The harmful effects of state cutbacks can be forestalled, as we saw in 2003-2004, when the Congress enacted a modest temporary increase in the federal share of Medicaid costs. This was a highly effective intervention that stimulated economic activity and protected vulnerable individuals. We believe that similar assistance is a crucial part of any economic stimulus package in 2008.

As you may know, the HIV community has other pressing issues on its agenda that will alleviate some of the pressure on the health system and increase the security that people with HIV/AIDS will have affordable access to the lifesaving medications and health services that they need. We hope to work with the Congress to enact Medicare-related provisions to take additional pressure

off of the Ryan White program, such as allowing ADAP spending to count as True Out-of-Pocket costs (TrOOP) under the Medicare Part D program. A temporary increase in the Medicaid FMAP and enactment of Medicare improvements are complementary steps that will improve health care access to persons living with HIV/AIDS and reduce fiscal demands on the critically important discretionary Ryan White program. But they serve different purposes and enactment of one does not negate the need for the other.

As you move forward, we encourage you to promptly enact a temporary economic stimulus package, including critical assistance for state Medicaid programs. This is a critical priority for the HIV/AIDS community. Please contact Laura Hanen with NASTAD at (202) 434-7138 or Robert Greenwald with the Treatment Access Expansion Project at (617) 390- 2584 to discuss this important issue further.

Sincerely,

AIDS Action

AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth & Families

AIDS Foundation of Chicago

The AIDS Institute

AIDS Project Los Angeles

American Academy of HIV Medicine

Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project

Gay Men's Health Crisis

Health and Disability Advocates

HIV Medicine Association

Housing Works

Indiana Minority Health Coalition, Inc.

Lifelong AIDS Alliance

National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors

National Association of People With AIDS

National Health Law Program

National Minority AIDS Council

New York AIDS Coalition

Project Inform

San Francisco AIDS Foundation

Title II Community AIDS National Network

Treatment Access Expansion Project

cc: Majority Leader Steny Hoyer
Majority Whip James Clyburn
House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman John Dingell
House Energy and Commerce Committee Ranking Member Joe Barton
House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Charlie Rangel
House Ways and Means Committee Ranking Member Jim McCrery
House Financial Services Committee Chairman Barney Frank
House Financial Services Committee Ranking Member Spencer Bachus