

Joint Letter of the HIV Health Care Access Working Group & the AIDS Budget and Appropriations Coalition



May 18, 2011

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

We are writing on behalf of the more than 1 million people living with HIV and AIDS and countless others affected by, and at risk for, HIV in the United States to **strongly urge you to oppose any FY2012 budget resolution or deficit reduction package that fails to protect our nation's health care safety net and maintain adequate investments in public health.** We are national and community-based AIDS service organizations that represent HIV medical providers, advocates and people living with HIV/AIDS and provide critical HIV-related health care and support services.

We understand the challenges you face in efforts to reduce the deficit and balance the budget –however, the House-passed budget resolution exemplifies the wrong approach for achieving this end. It would dismantle the Medicaid and Medicare programs, roll back necessary reforms enacted through the Affordable Care Act, and indiscriminately slash support for vital federal programs, harming people living with HIV disease as well as those at risk for HIV infection. Failure to continue our nation's investment in a health care safety-net and to support prevention, care and treatment and research programs will result in significant increases in HIV infections, higher hospital and emergency room costs and diminished hope for a cure and/or vaccine to eventually eradicate HIV.

As the Senate considers the FY2012 budget resolution and other deficit reduction proposals, we strongly urge you to:

Sustain the Federal Commitment to Our Country's Most Vulnerable Residents: Medicaid is the single largest supporter of HIV/AIDS care and treatment, providing coverage to approximately 40% of all people living with HIV and AIDS in the United States. Converting the federal contribution to the Medicaid program into a block grant, as the House-passed budget resolution would do, would shift greater costs to the states and drastically hinder their ability to meet the need for HIV prevention and care services. The proposal to privatize Medicare and shift costs to those who can least afford it – people with disabilities and seniors – would quite simply leave lifesaving care and treatment out of reach for people with HIV who rely on this program.

Support Health Care Reform Implementation: The House-passed budget resolution proposal to defund key components of the Affordable Care Act would leave millions, including hundreds of thousands of people with HIV, without access to health care coverage and services. Fewer than 20% of people with HIV currently have access to private insurance coverage. Congress must not abandon the vital reforms that will increase access to care and early intervention, prioritize prevention, and encourage new delivery models to support better coordinated and more cost-effective care.

Reject Significant Cuts to Discretionary Health Care Programs: The House-passed budget resolution proposal to decrease federal funding for health care spending by \$56 billion or 14.9% between FY11 and FY16 is short-sighted and unwise. Our nation's fiscal health will not be improved by jeopardizing the health of more than a million people living with HIV and AIDS in the United States. Without adequate HIV prevention programs, the number of new infections will continue to escalate as will health care costs to treat those newly infected. It is counterproductive to disable the prevention, care and research programs that have controlled the HIV epidemic and transformed HIV from a fatal to a complex but manageable condition in the United States.

Oppose multi-year spending caps that would impose significant reductions in domestic health and human needs

programs: Measures such as the Corker-McCaskill proposal to limit total federal spending to no more than 20.6 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would force severe cuts to domestic discretionary health and human needs programs, Medicare and Medicaid. Such spending caps would impose cuts even more severe than those proposed in the House-passed budget plan.

We cannot afford to retreat in our battle against HIV and AIDS and to weaken the health care safety-net programs that are vital to millions of the most vulnerable Americans. We strongly urge you to oppose any efforts to dismantle the Medicaid and Medicare programs, repeal or defund the reforms included in the Affordable Care Act, or dramatically cut discretionary health and human needs spending.

If you have any questions, please contact the ABAC co-chairs (Donna Crews at dcrews@aidsunited.org, Jen Heitel Yakush at jyakush@siecus.org, or Carl Schmid at cschmid@theaidsinstitute.org), or the HHCAWG co-chairs (Robert Greenwald, Treatment Access Expansion Project at rgreenwa@law.harvard.edu and Andrea Weddle, HIV Medicine Association at aweddle@hivma.org).

Sincerely,

ActionAIDS (PA)	L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center
AIDS Action Baltimore (MD)	Legacy Community Health Services
AIDS Alabama	Lower East Side Harm Reduction Center (NY)
AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth & Families	Metropolitan Latino AIDS Coalition (MLAC)
AIDS Foundation of Chicago	Minnesota AIDS Project (MN)
The AIDS Institute	Moveable Feast
AIDS Partnership Michigan	National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors
AIDS Project Los Angeles	National Association of People With AIDS (NAPWA)
AIDS United	National Black Gay Men's Advocacy Coalition (NBGMAC)
AIDS Legal Referral Panel (CA)	National Minority AIDS Council
AIDS Treatment Data Network	The National Working Positive Coalition
AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition	Okaloosa AIDS Support and Informational Services, Inc.(OASIS)
The American Academy of HIV Medicine	Project Inform
Association of Nurses in AIDS Care	Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Coalition
CAEAR Coalition	Ryan White Medical Providers Coalition
Colorado AIDS Project	San Francisco AIDS Foundation
Common Ground – the Westside HIV Community Center	Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)
Community Access National Network	SisterLove Inc., Atlanta, GA
Community Education Group	South Carolina Campaign to End AIDS
Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project	Treatment Access Expansion Project
Gay Men's Health Crisis	Treatment Action Group (TAG)
Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS North America (GNP+ NA)	U.S. Positive Women's Network (PWN)
Harlem United	Urban Coalition for HIV/AIDS Prevention Services (UCHAPS)
Health and Disability Advocates	Village Care
HIV/AIDS Alliance of Michigan	Women Organized to Respond to Life-threatening Diseases (WORLD)
HIV Law Project	WomenTogether for Change (St. Croix, VI)
HIV Medicine Association	
HIV Prevention Justice Alliance	
HIVictorious, Inc.	
Housing Works	

HHCAWG and ABAC are coalitions of more than 100 national and community-based AIDS service organizations representing HIV medical providers, public health professionals, advocates and people living with HIV/AIDS and providing critical HIV-related health care and support services.