



THE AIDS INSTITUTE

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THE AIDS INSTITUTE PRAISES HOUSE DEMOCRATS FOR PROPOSING HIGHER HIV PREVENTION FUNDING LEVELS

Increased Medicaid & Research Funding Also Included in Economic Stimulus Package

Washington, DC – Yesterday, the Democratic leadership of the U.S. House of Representatives unveiled the **American Recovery and Reinvestment Bill of 2009**. Included in this economic stimulus package is a proposed \$355 million for domestic HIV/AIDS, viral Hepatitis, STD and Prevention programs as part of a \$3 billion Prevention and Wellness Fund to prevent diseases and to reduce future healthcare costs.

“The AIDS Institute praises the House Democratic leadership for including increased funding for HIV prevention at the CDC,” commented Carl Schmid, Director of Federal Affairs. “We strongly agree with the House, preventing disease, such as HIV/AIDS, will dramatically reduce future healthcare costs.” The CDC estimates that the 56,300 new infections each year in the U.S. may result in \$56 billion in medical care and lost productivity.

Michael Ruppal, Interim Executive Director, noted “The House leadership stated that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan will make long-term investments that are worthy, needed, fully-screened, and based on merit, not politics. This is exactly the type of legislation that is needed right now that rightfully places healthcare as a top priority to the economic health of our economy and our country.”

Funding for HIV prevention at the CDC was cut by \$3.5 million this past year and both the House and Senate were proposing no increases for FY09. The AIDS Institute has been urging the Congress and the Obama-Biden Transition Team to dramatically increase HIV prevention spending particularly in light of CDC’s announcement last summer that the number of new infections in the U.S. has been 40 percent higher than previous estimates. The CDC has estimated it needs an additional \$877 million over the next five years to significantly reduce the number of new infections.

Approximately 70 percent of the CDC Center that would receive the new \$355 million is dedicated to HIV/AIDS, and therefore, The AIDS Institute trusts the bulk of the funds would go to HIV prevention. The AIDS Institute also strongly supports increased funding for Viral Hepatitis prevention, which currently is funded at only \$17.6 million.

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The AIDS Institute also strongly supports the \$87 billion in Medicaid aid to the states to temporarily increase the share of Medicaid costs the federal government reimburses states. Medicaid is the largest provider of HIV/AIDS care and treatment in the U.S. and due to the economic crisis, states are burdened with increased healthcare costs, particularly as people lose their jobs and health insurance. The bill also includes Medicaid coverage for people who are unemployed. Without these Medicaid increases, low-income people with HIV/AIDS would have to turn to the already overburdened and underfunded Ryan White HIV Program.

There are numerous other elements in the bill that will benefit people with HIV/AIDS. Under the proposed bill, spending at the National Institutes of Health would increase by \$2 billion. “We anticipate a portion of this funding would be dedicated to HIV/AIDS research, including the development of new drugs, biomedical prevention methods such as vaccines and microbicides, and behavioral research,” added Schmid.

The AIDS Institute urges the House to keep these provisions in the bill as the economic stimulus package moves through the House and hopes the Senate will include similar elements in their version of the bill.

One program that was not included to receive funding in the bill was the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP), which provides lifesaving medications to low-income people with HIV/AIDS. The Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust requested \$300 million to help states during this economic crisis so that people will be able to access medications. The AIDS Institute urges the Congress to support increased funding for ADAP as part of the economic stimulus package.

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*For more information and to become involved in AIDS advocacy work, please contact
The AIDS Institute at: (202) 835-8373, or by email at: Info@theaidsinstitute.org or www.TheAIDSInstitute.org*

*The AIDS Institute is a national nonprofit agency that promotes action for social change
through public policy research, advocacy and education.*