

July 16, 2009

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jerry Lewis
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Lewis:

Annually, nearly 8,000 people in the United States contract HIV/AIDS and approximately 12,000 people contract the hepatitis C virus directly or indirectly from sharing contaminated syringes. Syringe exchange programs are proven to be cost-effective and lifesaving, do not promote drug use, and provide a conduit to primary health care for hard to reach populations. For the first time since 1989, the Labor, Health and Human Services subcommittee has removed the ban on federal funding of syringe exchange programs from the FY 2010 Appropriations bill. **We thank the subcommittee for its leadership in using science-based research to bring an end to the decades-old ban.** As organizations dedicated to the eradication of HIV/AIDS and advocacy on behalf of those infected and affected by the epidemic, **we strongly urge the full Appropriations Committee to support the Labor, Health and Human Services subcommittee in its decision to remove the ban. Further, we urge you to vote against any amendment that would reinstate the federal ban or put further restrictions on syringe exchange.**

Syringe exchange programs (SEPs) are one of our most effective means of preventing HIV and hepatitis C infections. Numerous federally funded studies have confirmed the effectiveness of SEPs and have reaffirmed that they do not increase substance abuse. SEPs serve as a gateway to health care services for underserved populations and as a means of connecting injection drug users with substance abuse treatment. Law enforcement officials have endorsed the inclusion of SEPs as part of a larger, comprehensive prevention program as a means of protecting the public and law enforcement officials.

Syringe exchange programs are highly cost-effective. The cost of preventing one HIV infection through syringe exchange programs is approximately \$4,000 to \$12,000; which yields savings of as much as \$648,000 in medical costs per HIV infection and approximately \$25,000 to \$30,000 in medical costs per Hepatitis C infection prevented.

Most importantly, local communities should have available to them every tool necessary to address their local HIV and Hepatitis C epidemics. The ban on federal funding of SEPs prevents state and local jurisdictions from using their federal funds to best fight HIV and viral hepatitis at

the local level. Removing this restriction will in no way require states or localities to implement syringe exchange programs; it will simply permit them to use federal HIV and hepatitis prevention funds for this purpose should they so choose, within the context of a broader HIV and hepatitis prevention effort. Removal of the ban empowers communities to determine which scientifically proven prevention methods are best suited to serve their own epidemic without unwarranted restrictions by the federal government.

This is a great opportunity to restore evidence-based science and justice to national HIV and viral hepatitis prevention efforts. We urge you to support local communities' decision-making and end the ban on federal funding for syringe exchange from the Labor, Health and Human Services FY2010 Appropriations bill.

Please direct all inquires or comments to Carl Schmid of The AIDS Institute (cschmid@theaidsinstitute.org) 202-462-3042 or William McColl of AIDS Action (wmccoll@aidsaction.org), 202-530-8030.

Sincerely,

A Brave New Day, Jackson, MS

ACT UP Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA

Adelson Consulting Services Incorporated, Chelsea, MA

Advocates for Youth, Washington, D.C.

AIDS Action Council, Washington, D.C.

AIDS Alabama, South Birmingham, AL

AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth & Families, Washington, D.C.

AIDS Community Research Initiative of America (ACRIA), New York, NY

AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Chicago, IL

The AIDS Institute, Washington, D.C. & Tampa, FL

AIDS Project Hartford, Inc., Hartford, CT

AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA), Los Angeles, CA

AIDS Project of Central Iowa, Des Moines, IA

AIDS Project, State College & Lock Haven, PA

AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin

AIDS Services Foundation Orange County, Irvine, CA

AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland, Cleveland, OH

AIDS Treatment Activists Coalition (ATAC), New York, NY

American Academy of HIV Medicine, Washington, D.C.

American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD), Washington, D.C.

American Civil Liberties Union, New York, NY

American Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR), New York, NY

American Medical Student Association (AMSA), Reston, VA

Association of Nutrition Services Agencies (ANSA), Washington, D.C.

AVAC: Global Advocacy for HIV Prevention, New York, NY

Bethany Place, Belleville, IL

Better Existence with HIV (BEHIV), Chicago, IL

Bronx AIDS Services, Bronx, NY

CAEAR Coalition, Washington, D.C.

CAEAR Foundation, Washington, D.C.

California Hepatitis Alliance (CalHEP), Sacramento, CA

Carepoint Adult Child and Family Association, Evanston, IL

Caring Ambassadors Program, Inc., Oregon City, OR

Cascade AIDS Project, Portland, OR

Center for Health Improvement (CHI), Sacramento, CA

Center for Health Justice, West Hollywood, CA

Chicago Recovery Alliance, Chicago, IL

Citiwide Harm Reduction, Bronx, NY

Columbus Public Health, Columbus, OH

COMMON GROUND - the Westside HIV Community Center, Santa Monica, CA

Community Access National Network (CANN), Washington, D.C.

Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project (CHAMP), New York, NY & Providence, RI

Community HIV/Hepatitis Advocates of Iowa Network (CHAIN), Des Moines, IA

DC Fights Back, Washington, D.C.

Delaware HIV Consortium, Wilmington, DE

Gay Men's Health Crisis, New York, NY

Global AIDS Alliance, Washington, D.C.

Global Justice Ministry, Metropolitan Community Churches

Harlem United Community AIDS Center, New York, NY

Hartford Gay & Lesbian Health Collective, Hartford, CT

Health GAP (Global Access Project), New York, NY

Hearhis AIDS Coalition

Hep C Connection, Denver, CO

Hepatitis C Support Project/HCV Advocate, San Francisco, CA

Hepatitis Education Project, Seattle, WA

HIV Medicine Association, Arlington, VA

HIV/AIDS Alliance of Michigan, Ypsilanti, MI

HIV/AIDS Services for African Americans in Alaska, Anchorage, AK

HIVictorious, Inc., Madison, WI

Housing Works, Washington, D.C.

Houston Department of Health and Human Services, Houston, TX

Howard Brown Health Center, Chicago, IL

Human Rights Campaign, Washington, D.C.

Human Rights Watch, New York, NY

Infectious Diseases Society of America, Arlington, VA

Inova Juniper Program, Springfield, VA

The International Association of Physicians in AIDS Care, Washington, D.C.

International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS, Washington, D.C. & London, UK

International Women's Health Coalition, New York, NY

Internet Interventions Incorporated, Chelsea, MA

Legacy Community Health Services, Inc. Houston, TX

Lifelong AIDS Alliance, Seattle, WA

Michigan AIDS Coalition, Ferndale, MI

Michigan Positive Action Coalition (MI-POZ), Detroit, MI

Minnesota AIDS Project, Minneapolis, MN

Nashville CARES, Nashville, TN

National AIDS Fund, Washington, D.C.

National AIDS Housing Coalition, Washington, D.C.

National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors, Washington, D.C.

National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA), Silver Spring, MD

National Coalition of STD Directors (NCSD), Washington, D.C.

National Minority AIDS Council, Washington, D.C.

National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable (NVHR), Decatur, GA

Nevada AIDS Action New Age Services, Chicago, IL

The New York City AIDS Housing Network (NYCAHN), Brooklyn, NY

NYS AIDS Institute, Albany, NY

Ohio AIDS Coalition, Columbus, OH

Open Door Clinic, Elgin, IL

OraSure Technologies, Inc., Bethlehem, PA

Pediatric AIDS Chicago Prevention Initiative, Chicago, IL

Physicians for Human Rights, Cambridge, MA & Washington, D.C.

Prevention Point Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA

Project Inform, San Francisco, CA

Ryan White Medical Providers Coalition, Arlington, VA

The San Francisco AIDS Foundation, San Francisco, CA

Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS), Washington, D.C.

South Carolina Campaign to End AIDS (SC-C2EA), Columbia, SC

START at Westminster Status C Unknown, Medford, NY

Street Works, Nashville, TN

Test Positive Aware Network (TPAN), Chicago, IL

Total Health Awareness Team, Rockford, IL

Treatment Action Group (TAG), New York, NY

U.S. Positive Women's Network, Oakland, CA

Urban Coalition for HIV/AIDS Prevention Services (UCHAPS), Washington, D.C.

Village Care of New York, New York, NY

Women Organized to Respond to Life-threatening Disease (WORLD), Oakland, CA

Women's HIV Collaborative of New York, New York, NY