



THE AIDS INSTITUTE

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For Immediate Release: 2.28.08

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THE AIDS INSTITUTE APPLAUDS ACTION ON PEPFAR BY HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

WASHINGTON, DC – The AIDS Institute applauds the leadership of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Congressman Howard Berman for the majority and Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen for the minority, and the White House for reaching a bi-partisan agreement on the **Tom Lantos and Henry J. Hyde United States Global Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Reauthorization Act (H.R. 5501)**. This legislation serves to reauthorize the U.S. Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act of 2003, better known as the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) which is set to expire on September 30, 2008. Mr. Berman, who ascended to the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee with the passing of the late Congressman Tom Lantos earlier this month, said "the law we passed in 2003 was designed to deal with the emergency phase of the global HIV/AIDS crisis. The new legislation now will move our programs toward sustainability. Host governments must have the ability to plan, direct, and manage the programs already set into place".

The President had recommended \$30 billion for this program over the next five years. The AIDS Institute, along with other advocacy groups, and, thankfully, many in Congress, felt that the proposed level would negatively impact HIV prevention efforts and reduce new patients' access to treatment. Dr. Gene Copello, Executive Director of The AIDS Institute, said: "We are very encouraged by the fact that there was bi-partisan support for increasing the funding level to \$50 billion over five years."

James Sykes, Global Program Coordinator at The AIDS Institute, commented: "Other encouraging provisions include investments in strengthening HIV-related health care delivery systems and building health workforce capacities; building stronger linkages between the global HIV/AIDS initiative and existing programs designed to alleviate hunger, improve health care, and bolster schools; strengthening of prevention and treatment programs targeting women and girls; includes contributions of \$4 billion to the Global Fund; specifies \$9 billion for bilateral programs that address TB and Malaria; and it eliminates the 1/3 abstinence-only earmark."

The AIDS Institute is concerned, however, that the Global Gag Rule (GGR) and the Prostitution Pledge were not repealed. These add unnecessary, burdensome, and often confusing elements to PEPFAR programs. In addition, stronger language for linkage and referral services between PEPFAR programs and family planning programs would have further strengthened a more comprehensive approach to addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Likewise, a stronger emphasis on HIV testing would also strengthen the program.

The Foreign Affairs Committee, by voice vote, submitted the legislation for consideration by the full House of Representatives. The Senate is currently drafting its own version of the bill.

Copello concluded: "The AIDS Institute strongly encourages the reauthorization of the PEPFAR program at the level of \$50 billion over five years. PEPFAR is critical for the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, TB, and malaria. Our hope is that the bi-partisan spirit that has always characterized the approach to PEPFAR will continue in Congress as the House and Senate processes move forward. PEPFAR saves lives and that is what we all need to keep as the focus".

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For more information and to become involved in AIDS advocacy work, please contact
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The AIDS Institute is a national nonprofit and nonpartisan agency that promotes action for social change through public policy research, advocacy and education.