



THE AIDS INSTITUTE

For Immediate Release: 2.4.08

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## President's FY09 Budget – A Disaster for Domestic AIDS: *Congress Must Fund Critical Healthcare Priorities*

**Washington, DC** – “Congress must reject President Bush’s Fiscal Year 2009 budget in order to address the critical health needs of the over 1.1 million people living with HIV/AIDS in the United States,” commented Dr. Gene Copello, Executive Director of The AIDS Institute. “Most of the people who rely on these government programs for their healthcare and medicines are very poor and from minority communities. As the richest nation in the world, we can’t turn our backs on them. The budget the President has recommended ignores our Nation’s healthcare priorities and must be rejected.”

“We must also turn to the Congress to increase HIV prevention funding at the CDC. At the same time the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) is about to release higher HIV incidence numbers for the U.S., and is embarking on increasing HIV testing and case finding programs, the President is proposing to cut HIV prevention programs,” Copello continued.

“It is appalling that the President is recommending a measly \$1 million or .004% increase for the Ryan White CARE Act, which provides healthcare and medications for low-income people living with HIV/AIDS,” added Copello. “This does not even keep up with inflation, let alone take in account that more people need services due to new infections, new testing initiatives, and people are living longer. We will now have to turn to the Congress to adequately fund HIV/AIDS care and treatment.”

Many parts of the Ryan White program have faced cuts in recent years despite the growing demand. For the current year, HIV/AIDS funding for state health departments was cut by \$19 million at the same time state budgets are being stretched due to the economic downturn. The President is proposing an increase of only \$6 million for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) which provides lifesaving medications. This does not come close to the anticipated needed increase of \$133 million. Despite this minor increase, he is proposing cuts to other parts of the Ryan White program.

While the President is proposing to flat fund CDC HIV/AIDS programs overall, he is cutting HIV prevention programs by \$40 million and putting those funds into HIV testing. “While we need additional money for testing it should not come at the expense of HIV prevention,” commented Carl Schmid, Director of Federal Affairs for The AIDS Institute. “Additionally, the President is continuing to propose increases for failed and scientifically invalid abstinence-only until marriage programs, which is slated to receive a \$28 million increase. “We call on the Congress to correct these injustices,” added Schmid.

The President’s budget also flat funds HUD’s Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) program and NIH research. HOWPA assists individuals and families who are homeless or in threat of homelessness and living with HIV/AIDS. NIH funding increases are desperately needed so we can find new therapeutics and prevention strategies, including a vaccine and microbicides.

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“The AIDS Institute is also deeply concerned with the startling \$200 billion proposal to reduce Medicare and Medicaid over the next five years,” added Schmid. “As the two largest healthcare programs for people with HIV/AIDS, we will work very hard in the Congress to defeat any reduction that harms beneficiaries.”

The President renewed his pledge to fight the global pandemics of HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria by calling on Congress to authorize \$4.79 billion for the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). This represents a 3% increase over the funding level enacted in FY 2008. This landmark initiative, begun in earnest in 2004, has witnessed phenomenal successes such as providing life-saving retroviral treatment for approximately 1.45 million men, women, and children in the 15 focus countries. It has also provided care for more than 6.6 million people, including care for more than 2.7 million orphans and vulnerable children. To keep pace with the scale up of programs and services, as well as reassure the leadership of the countries where this program has made a significant impact on the lives of the people, Congress must continue to fund this program at levels that will sustain the efforts and achieve the desired outcomes.

Copello concluded: “While the President’s FY 2009 budget carries good news for addressing the global pandemic, it is terribly inadequate to address the epidemic in our own backyard. Following a trend now for several years, this budget will only further destabilize the prevention of HIV and the care and treatment of people living with HIV/AIDS in our own country. The AIDS Institute supports and applauds efforts to curb HIV/AIDS worldwide. However, we must see a new commitment and real leadership in stopping the epidemic in the United States as well.

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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](mailto:Info@theaidsinstitute.org) or [www.TheAIDSInstitute.org](http://www.TheAIDSInstitute.org)*

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