



THE AIDS INSTITUTE

National Office - Washington, DC: 202-835-8373

Administrative Office - Tampa, FL: 813-258-5929

For Immediate Release: 3.13.07

Media Contact: Carl Schmid, (202) 669-8267, CSchmid@theaidsinstitute.org

THE AIDS INSTITUTE COMMENDS BIPARTISAN SUPPORT TO EXPAND MEDICAID FOR PEOPLE WITH HIV Early Treatment of HIV Act Can Help Save Lives and Money

Washington, DC - The AIDS Institute commends Senators Gordon Smith (R-OR) and Hillary Clinton (D-NY), and 17 other Senators for reintroducing the Early Treatment for HIV Act (ETHA). ETHA would provide states the option of amending their Medicaid eligibility to extend coverage to uninsured, low-income persons with HIV, before they progress to full blown AIDS.

"It's just unimaginable that today, Medicaid doesn't automatically cover poor people with HIV in our country," commented Dr. Gene Copello, Executive Director of The AIDS Institute. "When current Medicaid rules were written, people with HIV quickly progressed to AIDS, but with the advent of antiretroviral drug treatment, people with HIV can remain healthy for years. It makes no sense to wait until people have AIDS before they can access medical care and drug treatment through Medicaid. With earlier treatment they can remain healthy and productive members of society. Passage of ETHA would bring the Medicaid system up to current healthcare and treatment standards," continued Copello.

ETHA, which is modeled after the highly successful Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention and Treatment Act, has been introduced in previous Congresses and is soon to be introduced in the House of Representatives by Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Rep. Elliot Engel (D-NY). In 2005, under the leadership of Sens. Smith and Clinton, the Senate passed an ETHA demonstration project. "In this Congress, we hope ETHA will finally become a reality," added Copello.

"Since there are so many people living with HIV/AIDS in our country who are in need of care and treatment, but are not receiving it, passage of ETHA will help thousands of people," commented Carl Schmid, Director of Federal Affairs for The AIDS Institute. According to the Institute of Medicine report, "Public Financing and Delivery of HIV/AIDS Care: Securing the Legacy of the Ryan White CARE Act", 233,000 of the 463,070 people living with HIV in the U.S. who need antiretroviral treatment do not have ongoing access to treatment. This does not include an additional 82,000 people who are infected but unaware of their HIV status and are in need of antiretroviral medications.

A study prepared by PricewaterhouseCoopers found that if ETHA was enacted, over 10 years: *the death rate for persons living with HIV on Medicaid would be reduced by 50 percent; --there would be 35,000 more individuals with CD4 levels above 500 under ETHA versus the existing Medicaid system; and --result in savings of \$31.7 million.*

The AIDS Institute thanks both Senators Smith and Clinton for their bipartisan leadership and the following other Senators who are original co-sponsors: Evan Bayh (D-IN), Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Norm Coleman (R-MO), Susan Collins (R-ME), Richard Durbin (D-IL), Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Blanche Lincoln (D-AR), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Bill Nelson (D-FL), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Charles Schumer (D-NY), Olympia Snowe (R-ME), Arlen Specter (R-PA), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), and Ron Wyden (D-OR).

###

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.