



THE AIDS INSTITUTE

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THE AIDS INSTITUTE COMMENDS SPEAKER PELOSI AND 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 Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Reps. Eliot Engel (D-NY) and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) for introducing the Early Treatment for HIV Act (ETHA) along with 51 other members of congress from both sides of the aisle. 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 today that 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 full blown 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 a reserve fund for a demonstration project was included in the 2008 Congressional Budget Resolution. In addition to the support of Speaker Pelosi, who has been a long time ETHA champion, co-sponsors of the bill include Majority Whip James Clyburn (D-SC), Democratic Caucus Chair Rahm Emanuel (D-IL) and Co-Chairs of the moderate Republican Tuesday Group, Reps. Charlie Dent (R-PA) and Mark Kirk (R-IL). A total of 27 Democrats and 27 Republicans are original sponsors of the bill.

A companion bill, S. 860, has been introduced in the Senate under the leadership of Sens. Gordon Smith (R-OR) and Hillary Clinton (D-NY). An additional 29 Senators have signed on as co-sponsors. The Senate has previously passed an ETHA demonstration project. “In this Congress, with the strong bipartisan support already demonstrated for this bill, we hope ETHA will finally become a reality,” added Copello.

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“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 low-income 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 Speaker Pelosi and Reps. Engel and Ros-Lehtinen for their leadership, along with the many other Democrats and Republicans who have co-sponsored ETHA. We urge the Congress to adapt it this year.

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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 and nonpartisan agency that promotes action for social change
through public policy research, advocacy and education.*