



THE AIDS INSTITUTE

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## **The AIDS Institute Urges Congress to Take Up Domestic HIV/AIDS Legislation** *Ryan White CARE Act Set to Expire on September 30<sup>th</sup>*

Washington DC - "The nation's response to caring and treating over half a million low-income people with HIV/AIDS in the U.S. expires on September 30<sup>th</sup>, and Congress is far from renewing the program," commented Dr. Gene Copello, Executive Director of The AIDS Institute. "'While funding for the program will be maintained,'" Copello continued, "a bill to reauthorize the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency (CARE) Act has yet to be introduced in either the House or the Senate. We call upon the Congress to take up the Ryan White CARE Act as soon as possible to ensure it adequately addresses the lifesaving health care needs of low-income people with HIV/AIDS throughout the U.S. today, and for the next five years, when the need will be even greater."

The Ryan White CARE Act was originally passed in 1990, and reauthorized again in 1996 and 2000; each time with huge bipartisan support. It was named after Ryan White, the 13-year-old boy who helped put a public face on the disease. It has been responsible for saving and improving the lives of hundreds of thousands of people by providing lifesaving medications and healthcare. Today, over half a million low-income, uninsured or underinsured people living with HIV/AIDS in the U.S. rely on Ryan White CARE Act programs to remain healthy.

"While I realize that Congress has many priorities on its agenda, providing lifesaving services to people with HIV/AIDS in our own country should be one of those priorities," said Jeanne White-Ginder, mother of Ryan White. Mrs. White-Ginder is a Board member of The AIDS Institute. "I only wish when Ryan was alive these drugs were available. Today, I see people being kept alive and able to live healthy and productive, longer lives -- but only when they are able to receive their medications and access medical care. I urge the Congress to expeditiously reauthorize the Ryan White CARE Act, and improve it so that everyone who is in need of these lifesaving medications and medical care, no matter where they live, can have the chance to stay alive."

"We have seen a changing face of the AIDS epidemic in the U.S. that Congress must address," added Deloris Dockrey, a Board member of The AIDS Institute from Newark, New Jersey. "People are increasingly poor and from minority communities who do not have access to adequate healthcare." She continues, "We can't meet the demand today, let alone address the 40,000 new HIV infections each year, on top of rising healthcare costs, federal and state Medicaid cutbacks, and the fact that people with HIV/AIDS are living longer. Congress must address these challenges by improving the CARE Act, and increasing its funding."

“The AIDS Institute laid out its recommendations on how to improve the CARE Act in April 2005,” said Marilyn Merida, Board President of The AIDS Institute, who administers a Ryan White CARE Act program in Tampa, Florida. “We ask Congress to support our proposal for continuous and equitable access to high quality healthcare from the point of diagnosis for all people in need of public assistance, regardless of where they live. The disparities in care from state to state are unacceptable and must end.”

Earlier this year, President Bush asked the Congress, in his State of the Union address, to reauthorize the Ryan White CARE Act. This summer, the Administration released its reauthorization principles. At that time, Health and Human Resources Secretary Michael Leavitt said, “President Bush has made stemming the spread of HIV/AIDS a top priority of his Administration, and the Ryan White CARE Act is essential to the fight against this terrible disease here at home. This act must be improved and modernized so we can bring compassionate care and treatment to those Americans living with HIV/AIDS. We urge Congress to reauthorize this vital legislation this year.”

“We support Secretary Leavitt’s words, and call upon Congress to reauthorize the CARE Act this year,” concluded Stephen Seewer, a Board member of The AIDS Institute from San Francisco, California. “While we recognize Ryan White CARE Act programs will not cease after September 30<sup>th</sup>, we are concerned that Congress has not yet taken any official action towards reauthorization. With so many complex issues on the table, there is so much work to be done before we will see a new and improved Ryan White CARE Act enacted into law. The over half a million people living with HIV/AIDS who depend on Ryan White CARE Act services to stay alive are looking forward to that day.”

**Note:** The AIDS Institute’s recommendations for reauthorization, can be found at: [\*The Next Wave in AIDS Care: Reauthorization of the Ryan White CARE Act 2005-2010\*](#)

For more information and to become involved in AIDS advocacy work, please contact The AIDS Institute at: (813) 974-2598, or by email at: [Info@theaidsinstitute.org](mailto:Info@theaidsinstitute.org)

The AIDS Institute is a nonprofit agency that promotes action for social change through public policy research, advocacy and community education. For more information, call (813) 974-2598 or visit on the web at: [www.TheAIDSInstitute.org](http://www.TheAIDSInstitute.org) or the campaign website at: [www.RyanWhiteACTION.org](http://www.RyanWhiteACTION.org)

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