



THE **AIDS** INSTITUTE

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## **CONGRESS MAINTAINS FUNDING FOR MOST DOMESTIC HIV AND HEPATITIS PROGRAMS**

*No Increase to Address Growing Hepatitis Infections*

**Washington, DC** – Funding for most domestic HIV/AIDS and hepatitis programs will be maintained in the Fiscal Year 2017 Omnibus Appropriations bill released by House and Senate Appropriators earlier today.

“The AIDS Institute applauds the Congress, particularly the leadership of the Appropriations Committees, for maintaining their support of domestic HIV and hepatitis prevention, care, treatment, and research programs,” commented Carl Schmid, Deputy Executive Director of The AIDS Institute. “While we are disappointed with cuts to some programs, we are pleased that Congress rejected most of the HIV program cuts proposed in earlier versions of the bill and many partisan proposals, such as defunding the Affordable Care Act and sexual health programs.”

Funding in FY2017 for the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program, including the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP), will be \$2.3 billion. The Ryan White Program provides medications, medical care, and essential coverage completion services to approximately 533,000 low-income, uninsured, and underinsured individuals with HIV. Unfortunately, Part C, which provides direct funding to community-based AIDS organizations for medical care, will be cut by \$4 million. A proposal contained in the Senate version of the bill to eliminate the Special Projects of National Significance (SPNS), was rejected. SPNS funds the development of innovative models of HIV care to quickly respond to the emerging needs of Ryan White Program clients.

The House bill maintains \$789 million for HIV prevention at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), including the Division of Adolescent and School Health. Currently, there are about 37,600 new HIV infections each year—representing a decline of 18 percent over the past six years and demonstrating that HIV prevention efforts are working. However, these improvements have not been shared by all communities, with growing

numbers of youth, particularly young black and Latino gay and bisexual men, being infected.

Congress is maintaining CDC Hepatitis Prevention funding at only \$34 million. There are nearly 55,000 new hepatitis transmissions each year and the CDC estimates that, between 2010 and 2013, the country saw an increase of more than 150 percent in new infections. Of the nearly 5.3 million people living with hepatitis B and/or hepatitis C in the U.S., as many as 65 percent are not aware of their infection. Viral hepatitis remains the leading cause of liver cancer. The number of deaths attributed to hepatitis C now surpasses the number of deaths associated with 60 other notifiable infectious diseases combined.

“The AIDS Institute is disappointed that the Congress is not increasing our nation’s investment in hepatitis prevention given the magnitude of the number of infections and the need for increased surveillance, testing, and education,” commented Michael Ruppal, Executive Director of The AIDS Institute. “The National Academies recently released a report that calls for the elimination of Hepatitis B and C in the United States by 2030. Without significant increases in funding, attaining those goals will be impossible.”

In a significant positive development, the Congress increased medical research funding at the National Institutes of Health by \$2 billion. It is our hope that a portion of this increase will be dedicated to AIDS research. Increased resources are needed to conduct research on an AIDS vaccine, new prevention and treatment technologies, and an eventual cure that will benefit not only the U.S. but the entire world as we continue to work toward a world without HIV.

Language that allows federal funding of ancillary services that support syringe exchange programs in areas experiencing increased HIV or hepatitis C infections due to injection drug use is maintained.

Proposed funding cuts to the Secretary of Health and Human Services’ Minority AIDS Initiative, the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program and Title X Family Planning services were not included in the final spending bill. Funding for HUD’s Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) program, which provides vital safe and stable affordable housing for people living with AIDS, was increased by \$21 million.

Disappointedly, Congress will be increasing funding for failed abstinence-only sexual education programs from \$10 to \$15 million while also decreasing funding for CDC’s STD Division by \$5 million.

“The AIDS Institute urges the Congress to pass this omnibus appropriations bill and will work to ensure that funding for these important programs, at a minimum, is maintained in FY2018, and funding cuts restored,” concluded Ruppal.

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

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