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Funding for Domestic HIV/AIDS Programs Largely Maintained by Federal Spending Bill
Policy Rider Impedes Prevention and Fails to Adequately Address ADAP Wait Lists

Washington, DC – “Progress in preventing HIV in the United States will be set back, while little will be done to provide additional care and treatment to people already living with HIV/AIDS in our country,” said Carl Schmid, Deputy Executive Director of The AIDS Institute, commenting on the final Fiscal Year 2012 spending bill to be voted on by Congress today. “This is especially disappointing in light of the optimism expressed by national and global leaders just two weeks ago on World AIDS Day,” he continued.

At the insistence of the House of Representatives, the bill would reinstate a federal funding ban of syringe exchange programs, a scientifically proven method to prevent HIV and other blood borne infections, while not increasing drug use. Additionally, the bill would resurrect failed abstinence-only-until-marriage programs, but only at a minimal level of $5 million.

Despite an estimated 50,000 new HIV infections each year and over 240,000 people unaware of their infection, funding for HIV prevention at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) would be cut by $10 million. Surprisingly, this cut would be to its school health HIV program. The CDC reports that young people aged 13–29 accounted for 39% of all new HIV infections in 2009.

The bill flat funds the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program except for a $15 million increase, originally proposed by the Senate, for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP). The Ryan White Program provides care and treatment to over 550,000 low-income people with HIV/AIDS. According to NASTAD, there are currently 4,155 people in 12 states on ADAP waiting lists and over 445 people in six states who have been disenrolled from the program due to budget constraints and growing enrollment.

On World AIDS Day, President Obama, recognizing the need for additional funding for both care and treatment for low income people with HIV/AIDS in the U.S., announced $50 million in additional funds for the Ryan White Program. As part of that announcement, ADAP would receive an additional $35 million. While it is not known yet
how the funds will be distributed, taken together, the $50 million in new ADAP money could eliminate the ADAP wait lists if it is distributed to the wait list states.

“We are extremely grateful to both President Obama and the Congress for continuing to recognize the importance of providing medications to people with HIV/AIDS and the serious funding gap for ADAP,” commented Michael Ruppal, Executive Director of The AIDS Institute. “While it is far from enough to meet the growing need, these increases are a very positive development.” According to HRSA data, the number of ADAP clients served nationally has grown an astounding 40 percent from FY07-CY10.

Under the bill, funding for medical research at the National Institutes of Health would increase by $299 million.

The final bill, which is a product of negotiation between the House and the Senate, is far better than the one introduced earlier this year by House Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Denny Rehberg. That bill would have decimated the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program by cutting its budget from $105 million to $20 million, eliminate all Title X spending, and the entire Prevention and Public Health Fund. Additionally it would have prevented implementation of much of the Affordable Care Act.

The bill also includes an across the board 0.189 percent cut, meaning all programs are subject to being cut even further.

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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.

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@theaids institute.org or www.TheAIDSInstitute.org