Subject: AIDS Community Concerns with FY2016 Congressional Appropriation Bills

Dear Members of Congress:

We, the undersigned xx organizations, would like to share with you our serious concerns with several aspects of the House and Senate FY2016 appropriations bills as they relate to domestic HIV/AIDS funding. While we are very appreciative of the work of the House and Senate Appropriation Committees and the many positive elements in these bills, there are several programs that have been proposed to be eliminated or dramatically cut that will directly impact domestic HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and treatment programs. (See ABAC funding chart at http://bit.ly/1HxvGEN for a complete listing of funding levels for specific programs).

We commend the Congress for maintaining funding for most parts of the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program; CDC’s Division of HIV Prevention, the Division of Adolescent and School Health, and Division of Viral Hepatitis; HUD’s Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS; substantial increases in funding to the National Institutes of Health; and modified language regarding syringe exchange programs.

However, the budget cuts proposed are unacceptable and must be restored. Therefore, we call on the Congress and the President to come to the table to develop an overarching budget deal that eliminates sequestration and increases the budget caps to levels high enough to adequately fund necessary healthcare and other critical investments to ensure the future growth of our nation.

With increased budget levels, we would ask that funding for the following programs be restored in the Labor-HHS Appropriation bills (H.R. 3020; S.1695):

- **HHS Secretary’s Minority AIDS Initiative Fund (SMAIF).** The Senate bill completely eliminates all $52 million for this initiative for racial and minority communities who are most affected by HIV/AIDS. SMAIF programs provide funding to federal agencies to form collaborative efforts that develop innovative best practices and strategies to improve health outcomes for those most impacted by HIV. These programs enhance, rather than replace, other federal recourses. A complete loss in funding would result in the elimination of AIDS.gov, and cutting edge programs aimed at racial minorities, including the MSM of Color initiative and Partnerships 4 Care that improves HIV testing and treatment at community health centers. HIV funding for the Indian Health Service, Regional Health Administrators, the Office of Population Affairs, the Office of Minority Health, and the Office of Women’s Health would also be cut.
- **SAMHSA Minority AIDS Initiative.** The Senate bill has proposed cutting SAMHSA’s HIV/AIDS program by $9 million. The program enhances and expands effective, culturally-competent HIV/AIDS-related behavioral services in minority communities for people who need behavioral health services.

- **Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Special Projects of National Significance (SPNS)** program is completely eliminated under the Senate bill. The $25 million program develops innovative service models for HIV care to respond to the needs of Ryan White Program clients, especially those clients representing the most vulnerable populations including women of color, transgender individuals, incarcerated persons, homeless people with multiply diagnosed co-morbidity, Latinos, MSM, and individuals co-infected with HIV and hepatitis C. Current funding supports programs to increase HIV care in community health centers, health information technology to improve the HIV care continuum, culturally appropriate interventions to reach Latinos, building medical homes for HIV positive homeless populations, and enhancing care for transgender women of color.

- **CDC Division of STD Prevention** was cut by $32 million in the Senate bill. Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are on the rise in the U.S. and can increase susceptibility to HIV infection. This is the only federal agency providing funding for STD prevention in all 50 states and nine cities/territories.

- **Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program (TPPP)** was essentially eliminated in both the House and Senate bills. The program’s rigorous evaluation and training and technical assistance to communities provides young people access to age-appropriate and medically-accurate information to prevent unintended pregnancy, HIV, and other STDs.

- **Title X Family Planning**: The House has proposed to completely eliminate the Title X program, while the Senate has proposed to cut the program by nearly $29 million. Title X is the nation’s only dedicated source of family planning funding, and offers HIV/AIDS prevention education and testing in addition to screening and treatment for other STDs.

- **Affordable Care Act (ACA)**: Both the House and Senate bills eliminate funding to carry out the implementation of parts of the ACA. The ACA has been successful in extending health care coverage to millions, including people living with HIV.

- **Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)** was eliminated in the House bill and cut by $127 million in the Senate bill. AHRQ is a trusted source of data and analysis about our nation’s health care system and it sponsors the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force and the HIV Research Network.

Again, we thank you for your continued leadership in the fight against HIV/AIDS and your support of these critical federal programs. We urge Congress to raise the restrictive budget caps in order to ensure these programs receive continued adequate funding. We look forward to working with you and the entire Congress as you address the FY2016 appropriations bills.

Sincerely,

[list in formation]

30 for 30 Campaign  
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
ActionAIDS  
ADAP Educational Initiative
Minnesota AIDS Project
Moveable Feast
Nashville CARES
National AIDS Housing Coalition
National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD)
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Black Gay Men’s Advocacy Coalition (NBGMAC)
National Black Justice Coalition
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Coalition of STD Directors
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund
National Latino AIDS Action Network (NLAAN)
National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC)
North Carolina AIDS Action Network
North Central Texas HIV Planning Council (Fort Worth)
OASIS
Pacientes de sida pro política sana
Partners for Safe and Healthy Communities
Pediatric AIDS Chicago Prevention Initiative
PFLAG National
Positively U, Inc
Prevention On The Move/ Steward Marchman Act Behavioral Healthcare
Project Inform
San Francisco AIDS Foundation
Seattle TGA HIV Planning Council
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)
Southern AIDS Coalition
Southern HIV/AIDS Strategy Initiative
START at Westminster
Suncoast Hep C Friends
TOUCH-Together Our Unity Can Heal, Inc.
Treatment Action Group (TAG)
UAB - 1917 Outpatient, Dental & Research Clinic
Urban Coalition for HIV/AIDS Prevention Services (UCHAPS)
VillageCare

VOCAL-NY
The Wall Las Memorias Project
Washington Heights CORNER Project
Women at Work International
The Women's Collective
Women With a Vision, Inc.