DOMESTIC HIV/AIDS FUNDING CUTS PARTIALLY RESTORED

Overall drop in funding will impede efforts to achieve an AIDS-free generation

Washington, DC – “While some of the sequestration cuts to domestic HIV/AIDS programs will be restored, compared to previous years, funding is down. This will impede our Nation’s progress in preventing HIV and providing everyone with HIV with the care and treatment they need,” commented Carl Schmid, Deputy Executive Director of The AIDS Institute on the FY14 omnibus appropriations measure released by the Congress last night. “Sadly, this will prolong the day when we can achieve an AIDS-free generation.”

We are grateful that during these difficult budgetary times, the Congress restored some of the $380 million in cuts to HIV programs caused by sequestration. These cuts have resulted in longer wait times for patients to see their providers, fewer testing and education programs, and staff reductions, while at the same time patient loads are increasing.

Under the proposed FY14 spending bill, funding for the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program would be $2.32 billion, an increase of $70 million over the sequestration level. This is $24 million less than the FY13 enacted level and far less than the prior year. The Ryan White Program provides medical care, treatment and other services to 550,000 low-income people with HIV and has been struggling to keep up with the new patients needing care and treatment.

As part of the Ryan White Program, the bill would allocate $900 million to the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) for lifesaving medications to people with HIV. Many state ADAPs have had to institute waiting lists in recent years due to increased demand for medications. ADAP is currently operating at $886 million in federal funds. The level agreed upon is far short of President Obama’s budget request of $943 million, which was supported by the US Senate.

For the first time in its history, Ryan White Program funding distributed to cities and states by formula will be based directly on HIV and AIDS case counts, a position long held by
The AIDS Institute. This meets the goals of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy, which calls for “equitable resource allocation” of federal resources.

The bill allocates $761 million to HIV prevention at the CDC. This represents an increase of nearly $20 million over the sequestration level, but falls short of the FY13 enacted level of $785 million. There continues to be about 50,000 new HIV infections each year, yet the federal government allocates only 4% of its domestic HIV spending on prevention. Funding for hepatitis prevention at the CDC would be almost $29 million. The AIDS Institute is disappointed Congress did not adequately increase the investment in prevention needed to bring down the number of new HIV and hepatitis infections and carry out the National HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis Strategies.

The Congress continued to limit the federal government’s ability to implement proven prevention programs by continuing to ban funding for syringe exchange programs.

Funding for the Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA) program at HUD would be set at $330 million in FY14. This is $5 million higher than the sequestration level, but $2 million less than the FY13 enacted level.

Medical research at the National Institutes of Health would total nearly $30 billion, an increase of almost $1 billion over the sequestration level, but $714 million short of the FY13 enacted level.

“We congratulate the Congress for coming to terms with its spending bills; it provides the certainty needed by the federal agencies and those who carry out the government’s HIV programs throughout the country," commented Michael Ruppal, Executive Director of The AIDS Institute. “However, while we are pleased to see some restoration of the cuts caused by sequestration, the overall trend is very troubling if we are to make real progress in ending AIDS. Given the budget agreement, which will guide spending levels for this year and next, and its severe reduction in discretionary spending, we urge the Congress to maintain its overall commitment to public health and those programs that prevent HIV and provide care, treatment and other coverage completion services for people living with HIV," Ruppal concluded.

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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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