The Ryan White Working Group (RWWG), part of the Federal AIDS Policy Partnership, is writing to ask your assistance on an important matter of timely access to accurate information about Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program (RWHAP) grant awards. RWWG members include Ryan White grantees, providers, and advocates for people living with HIV/AIDS. We value HRSA as a primary source of data not only about RWHAP services, clients and outcomes, but also to understand the overall progress of addressing HIV in the United States under the National HIV/AIDS Strategy, Updated to 2020 (NHAS 2020).

Among other goals, the NHAS 2020 seeks “a more coordinated national response to the HIV epidemic, including “improved mechanisms to monitor and report on progress toward achieving national goals” under the strategy. The strategy calls upon federal agencies to “strengthen the timely availability and use of data,” and to “support appropriate public access to data systems and disseminate evaluation findings through multiple channels.”

Providing timely information on RWHAP grant awards in a timely basis is extremely useful for program integrity and helpful to assessing year to year changes based on HIV surveillance and other factors. Unfortunately, we have encountered barriers to accessing complete and accurate information about RWHAP grants on a timely basis. The Part B information for 2015 currently reported through the on-line HRSA Data Warehouse is not detailed enough to be useful and has been found to be unreliable and incomplete. For example, the numbers provided are total grant awards and do not provide breakdowns between Part B State Formula, which covers care and treatment services, and the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) Formula and ADAP Supplemental Awards. Additionally, some of the information is incorrect. Specifically, the award amount indicated for the State of Illinois is $28.8 million, which would translate into a $12.8 million cut or 30.8 percent in funding from the previous year. However, when we sought to verify this report with Illinois officials, we were advised that $28.8 million is not the entire Part B, including ADAP, award for the state for 2015. The total is closer to $45.8 million. It appears that the reported amount only reflects the AIDS Drug Assistance Program Formula
Award and the Part B Formula award was not included. We have not attempted to verify reported Part B awards for all states, and it would be impractical to do so.

We have been told that HRSA as a matter of policy will not release complete detailed 2015 grant awards that breakdown what is Part B Formula, ADAP Formula or ADAP Supplemental until well after the last RWHAP awards to states are made, which will not occur until well after September 30, 2015. The reason for this delay is not clear, particularly since these awards were made in April.

We believe that grant amounts and grantees should be made public as soon as they are awarded. This lack of transparency is compounded by the fact that HRSA posts incomplete and inaccurate information through its Data Warehouse.

We request that your office take this opportunity to move forward under the updated NHAS by reviewing HRSA’s current disclosure policies, practices and procedures, and take actions as appropriate to improve the timely transparency of grant awards.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

cc: Douglas Brooks, Director, Office of National AIDS Policy, The White House
Laura Cheever, Associate Administrator, Health Resources and Services Administration