June 28, 2011

RE: VOTE “YES” ON SB 137 – LIMIT PRESCRIPTION DRUG COST-SHARING

Dear Senator:

The AIDS Institute is a leading national nonprofit organization that promotes action for social change through public policy research, advocacy, and education. As an advocacy organization for people living with or at risk of infection with HIV, we are writing to voice our strong support for Senate Bill 137, a bill that would amend title 18 of the Delaware code relating to cost-sharing, deductible or co-insurance for Tier IV or specialty tier prescription drugs introduced by State Sen. Margaret Rose Henry.

HIV/AIDS is a serious and significant health concern in the United States with over 1.1 million people living with HIV/AIDS and with approximately 56,400 new infections each year. According to the Delaware Department of Health, approximately 5,100 Delawareans are currently living with HIV/AIDS. HIV disproportionately impacts racial and ethnic minority communities and low income people who depend on public services for their life-saving health care and treatment. Access to medications is critical to keeping people with HIV/AIDS healthy and alive.

Private insurance companies have a formulary that lists the specific drugs they cover and at what level of cost sharing. Plans typically use different levels of cost sharing for generic, preferred, and non-preferred drugs. An increasing number of plans include an additional “specialty” tier for very expensive drugs and devices.
Consequently, enrollees are required to pay a percentage of the cost of the most expensive medications as opposed to a fixed amount. With very few generic anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs) available, ARVs are frequently relegated to the specialty tier. This prejudiced cost-sharing structure places a significant burden upon people living with chronic diseases such as HIV/AIDS. Subsequently, many people may be tempted to stop taking their prescribed medication because they simply cannot afford it.

The AIDS Institute commends you for considering the health insurance needs of Delawareans with chronic diseases. SB 137 will ensure that every person living with chronic illnesses in Delaware has affordable access to the therapies that can slow disease progression and increase the quality of their lives. Patients should not have to choose between saving their lives and spending their life savings!

Sincerely,

Carl E. Schmid II
Deputy Executive Director