

AIDS Foundation OF CHICAGO

2004 Candidate Questionnaire on HIV/AIDS Issues Primary Races for the United States Senate

Health Care

1. Medicaid is the single largest payer of AIDS care in the United States, providing regular medical care, including life-prolonging medications, to hundreds of thousands of low-income individuals living with HIV/AIDS.

a. Do you support upholding Medicaid's entitlement status and continuing federal matching funds for state Medicaid expenses, affirming the federal-state commitment to providing healthcare for the country's poor and disabled?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

b. Do you believe Medicaid funding should be given to states in a block grant?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

c. Do you support the Early Treatment for HIV Act, which would allow state Medicaid programs to cover economically eligible people living with HIV before the disease renders them totally work-impaired?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

2. The federal Ryan White CARE Act is the most important source of discretionary funding for essential healthcare and social services for uninsured and underinsured persons living with HIV/AIDS. CARE Act funding allows states and cities heavily impacted by HIV/AIDS to provide a safety net of life-prolonging services for individuals in need.

a. Do you support significantly increased government funding for all titles of the Ryan White CARE Act, including the AIDS Drug Assistance Program, to provide medical and supportive services for the increasing number of people living with HIV/AIDS?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

b. Do you support a Ryan White CARE Act program that continues to target funds for primary care and essential support services in order to meet the complex needs of people living with HIV/AIDS?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

Disease Prevention

3. Comprehensive, science-based HIV prevention strategies that include condom distribution, syringe exchange and access, street outreach, risk-reduction education, and counseling have proven effective in lowering annual HIV infections from a high of 150,000 to the current level of 40,000.

- a. Do you support increased funding for comprehensive and science-based HIV prevention strategies to reduce the spread of HIV infection?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

- b. Given the overwhelming body of evidence demonstrating the efficacy of needle exchange as HIV prevention, do you support lifting the ban on federal funding for needle exchange programs as a strategy to reduce HIV transmission among injection drug users, their partners, and children?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

4. Scientific research proves that comprehensive and medically accurate, "abstinence-plus" education leads to reduced risk-behavior by young people, while there is no evidence that "abstinence-only" education programs are effective.

- a. Do you support federal guidelines that create financial incentives for "abstinence-only" sexuality education, and disincentives for medically accurate, comprehensive "abstinence-plus" sexuality education?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

- b. Will you support the promotion of science-based sexuality education and disease prevention education in the nation's schools?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

Research

5. US researchers have made extraordinary advances in AIDS treatments since the beginning of the epidemic. Although many products are in the research pipeline, effective vaccines and microbicides will not be available for years without sustained financial and ideological commitments.

- a. Do you support increased government funding and incentives for anti-HIV vaccines, microbicides, simplified antiretroviral therapies, and other needed global health technology?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

- b. In an effort to bolster research and development and allow for quick distribution once approved, will you support purchase pre-commitments of anti-HIV vaccines and microbicides?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

c. Will you support the investigation of approved, peer-reviewed research projects conducted through the National Institutes of Health?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

Public Benefits

6. Welfare beneficiaries living with HIV and other chronic, pre-disabling conditions often face significant barriers to employment and self-support. Welfare reform initiatives at the federal, state, and local levels have resulted in dramatically increased sanction rates for these groups, leaving many without any income support, housing, or healthcare at all.

a. Will you support new disability protections as part of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) reauthorization that would require a medically appropriate assessment of barriers to employment for beneficiaries with chronic, pre-disabling conditions, services, and accommodations to promote independence?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

b. Will you support an HIV welfare sanction exemption that would allow participation in workfare, training, and other programs but protect HIV-positive welfare beneficiaries from losing healthcare and other supports due to welfare sanctions?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

Immigration and Anti-Discrimination Policies

7. Current law restricts HIV-positive people from gaining entry into the United States.

a. Will you remove the discriminatory and unnecessary ban against HIV-positive people seeking to enter and/or immigrate to the United States?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

b. Will you support increasing access to housing and healthcare services for HIV-positive, undocumented immigrants?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

8. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protects people living with or suspected of having HIV/AIDS from discrimination by public or private employers, the government, and providers of public accommodations, telecommunications, and transportation.

a. Do you support strengthening the ADA by legislation and regulation to ensure equal opportunities for employment, healthcare, government services, and accommodations for Americans with disabilities, including HIV/AIDS?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

Housing

9. For people living with HIV/AIDS, safe, affordable, and stable housing is a matter of life or death. Housing instability and homelessness are associated with increased risk for contracting HIV/AIDS and can lead to poorer health outcomes, as people living with HIV/AIDS often must adhere to complex medication regimens.

a. Do you support increased funding for the Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS program, rent subsidies for people with disabilities, and incentives for affordable housing development?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

b. Do you support changing the Section 8 program into a block grant to states?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

c. Will you allow the Department of Housing and Urban Development to continue providing McKinney-Vento Act funding for programs that integrate supportive services into housing programs for homeless individuals and families?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

Global AIDS

10. With more than 42 million people infected worldwide, the AIDS pandemic is devastating economies throughout the world, increasingly threatens global security, and is destroying the social fabric of nations.

a. Will you increase funding levels for international HIV/AIDS programs and initiatives to at least \$30 billion by 2008 with at least half directed to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

b. Will you support the "Mexico City Policy," which has diminished the availability of important family planning services in the developing world, putting more women and children at risk of contracting HIV?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

11. Please submit a brief answer to the following question: **As a Senator, how will you respond to the AIDS epidemic in the United States and across the world?**