

# JOINT LETTER TO ILLINOIS MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ON CARE ACT REAUTHORIZATION

September 2005

Dear Member of Congress:

As individuals impacted by HIV/AIDS throughout the state of Illinois, and as organizations serving people living with and at risk for HIV/AIDS in rural, suburban, and urban communities, we write to express our deep concern regarding President Bush's Ryan White CARE Act reauthorization principles. The CARE Act is the nation's flagship response to the domestic HIV/AIDS epidemic, having provided comprehensive medical and social services to poor, uninsured people who have no other options for healthcare since 1990. We wish to see the CARE Act continue in its role of "safety net" by providing these lifesaving services to all individuals in need, regardless of where they live.

HIV/AIDS remains a life threatening infectious disease and a significant public health emergency. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, over one million people in the United States are living with HIV, including more than 405,000 with AIDS. Approximately 211,000 individuals need antiretroviral treatment but have no means to access them. Over 1,900 people languish on AIDS Drug Assistance Program waiting lists around the country. The Institute of Medicine estimates that over 314,000 people with HIV/AIDS in the United States lack consistent care and treatment. Meanwhile, the demand for services grows steadily. Each year, more than 40,000 new infections occur in the U.S., 1,600 of those in Illinois. More than 30,000 AIDS cases and over 16,400 deaths due to AIDS have been reported in Illinois since 1981.

After five years of flat funding and cuts for essential HIV/AIDS prevention and care services, and without a commitment for new funding, the administration proposes to shift significant CARE resources away from hard-hit states to address HIV/AIDS in less populous and rural states.

Rural areas, especially in the South, are struggling against longstanding healthcare access problems, which are exacerbated by increasing rates of HIV in their communities. While all individuals living with HIV/AIDS should have the ability to access quality care and treatment, disparities in healthcare experienced by poor people in one part of the country should not be addressed at the expense of poor people in another part of the country. Stealing from Peter to pay Paul — and dismantling lifesaving services for vulnerable populations with no other means to access health care — is unacceptable. Illinois will withstand significant cuts in funding and will suffer diminished infrastructure and service capacity should the administration's principles be enacted. Thousands of Illinoisans with HIV/AIDS will face life-threatening gaps in care if the administration's proposal is enacted.

We call on you to provide the leadership necessary to ensure that geography does not determine access to essential medical and social services. We call on Congress to increase CARE Act funding by \$594 million and to devise a plan to distribute the resources in a way that is fair and equitable to every American living with HIV/AIDS in need of healthcare, rejecting the administration's faulty principles. We also ask for the maintenance of local control to determine the appropriate mix of vital medical and supportive social services in every jurisdiction that receives funding.

Since its inception in 1990, the CARE Act has enjoyed strong bipartisan support because of its ability to reach those in greatest need in both urban and rural communities. We look to you to continue the CARE Act legacy by reauthorizing the program, appropriating sufficient funding, and ensuring geographic equity so that Americans with HIV/AIDS—wherever they may live—can receive the rational and cost-effective out-patient services they need to survive.

Sincerely,

ORGANIZATIONS:

A Safe Haven, L.L.C., Chicago  
Access Community Health Network, Chicago  
Agape Missions, Joliet  
AIDS Care, Chicago  
AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Chicago  
AIDS Legal Council of Chicago, Chicago  
AIDS Pastoral Care Network, Chicago  
Ambulatory & Community Health Network, Chicago  
A.M.I.R.O. Inc., Chicago  
Asian Human Services, Inc., Chicago  
Better Existence with HIV (BEHIV), Evanston  
Canticle Ministries, Wheaton  
Catholic Charities, Chicago  
Center on Halsted, Chicago  
Central Illinois Friends of PWA, Inc., Peoria  
Chicago Department of Public Health, Chicago  
Chicago House & Social Services Agency, Chicago  
Chicago Recovery Alliance, Chicago  
Children's Place Association - Chicago  
Come Alive Social Service, Chicago  
Community Counseling Centers of Chicago, Chicago  
CORE Center, Prevention and Education Department, Chicago  
East Central Illinois HIV Care Consortium, Urbana  
Equality Illinois  
Erie Family Health Center  
Families' and Children's AIDS Network, Chicago  
Fertile Ground Foundation, Dolton  
Fifth Street Renaissance, Springfield  
Fox River Valley Center for Independent Living, Elgin  
Genesis House, Chicago  
Greater Westside Development Corporation, Chicago  
Health and Disability Advocates, Chicago  
Healthworks Theater, Chicago  
Hemophilia Foundation of Illinois  
HIV Care Program/Research & Education Foundation of Michael Reese- Chicago  
Howard Brown Health Center, Chicago  
Jackson County Health Department, Murphysboro  
Jackson Park Hospital, Chicago  
Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation Global AIDS Talk Force, Evanston  
Jo-Ray House, Chicago  
Kankakee County Health Department, Kankakee

Lee County Health Department, Dixon  
Let's Talk Let's Test Foundation, Chicago  
Lifescape Community Service, Inc., Rockford  
Men & Women In Prison Ministries, Harvey  
Metropolitan Chicago Health Care Council, Chicago  
Mount Carmel Community Development Corporation – HIV/AIDS Ministry, Chicago  
Mount Sinai Hospital/ Sinai Health System, Chicago  
NAMES Project Chicago, Chicago  
National Coalition for LGBT Health, Policy Work Group, Oak Park  
The Night Ministry, Chicago  
Open Door Clinic, Aurora  
Open Door Clinic, Elgin  
PAWS/ Metro East, Caseyville  
Pediatric AIDS Chicago, Chicago  
Pediatric AIDS Chicago Prevention Initiative, Chicago  
Peoria City/County Health Department, Peoria  
Phoenix Center, Springfield  
Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Chicago  
Project Vida, Chicago  
Rainbow PUSH Coalition, Chicago  
Research and Education Foundation of Michael Reese, Chicago  
Resources Unlimited Foundation, Oak Park  
Rock River Valley Pantry, Rockford  
Roger Baldwin Foundation/ ACLU, DeKalb  
Ruth M. Rothstein CORE Center - Chicago  
Ruth M. Rothstein CORE Center, Prevention and Education Department, Chicago  
Sankofa Way Spiritual Services, Inc., Chicago  
SIREA, Inc, Carbondale  
Southern Illinois Coalition for the Homeless, Marion  
Southside Health Association/Luck Care Center  
South Side Help Center, Chicago  
South Suburban HIV/AIDS Regional Coalition, Ford Heights  
Stone Temple Baptist Church, Chicago  
TASC – Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities, Chicago  
Test Positive Aware Network (TPAN), Chicago  
Total Health Awareness Team, Rockford  
Truth & Deliverance Christian Church, Chicago  
University of Chicago Comer Children's Hospital – Pediatric and Adolescent HIV Program,  
Chicago  
Vital Bridges, Chicago  
Wesley United Methodist Church, Chicago  
Westside HIV/AIDS Regional Planning Coalition (WHARP), Chicago  
Winnebago HIV CARE Consortium, Rockford

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Smith, Cleo- South Holland  
Smith, Gerald- Chicago  
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