



On July 27, 2005, U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt called on Congress to reauthorize the Ryan White CARE Act in ways that will strengthen the program, support compassionate care and treatment, and encourage prevention efforts. Secretary Leavitt said, "President Bush has made stemming the spread of HIV/AIDS a top priority of his Administration, and the Ryan White CARE Act is essential to the fight against this terrible disease here at home...this Act must be improved and modernized so we can bring compassionate care and treatment to those Americans living with HIV/AIDS. We urge Congress to reauthorize this vital legislation this year."

Housing Works urges the AIDS community to consider the following proposed principles as a starting point for finding common ground towards a Ryan White CARE Act reauthorization plan that will ensure quality care and treatment for everyone in our nation living with AIDS and HIV.

Ensure Universal HIV Treatment Nationwide

According to the Institute of Medicine's recent report "Public Financing of HIV/AIDS Care," over a quarter of a million Americans living with HIV can't get access to HIV treatment. Thousands of Americans have languished on waiting lists for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program, and some have died before they made it to the top of the list.

RECOMMENDATION: Ensure stable access to HIV treatment for everyone in the United States who needs it, regardless of where they live. Geography should not be a death sentence for people with AIDS.

Support Adequate Funding Now

With over one million Americans now living with AIDS and HIV and more than 40,000 Americans newly infected each year, we can't afford another five years of flat and inadequate AIDS funding. We must meet the needs of uninsured and underinsured people living with AIDS and HIV in every part of the country.

RECOMMENDATION: Increase Ryan White CARE Act funding by \$513 million to a total of \$2.56 billion for fiscal year 2006. Increases should not be forced offsets from other vital programs, and the CARE Act should be protected from across-the-board cuts. People with AIDS are not budget offsets.

Establish a Standard for HIV Care

Current program standards allow unreasonable variations in services and benefits for public HIV care programs across the country. Doctors, frontline providers and public health officials know what it takes to keep people living with AIDS and HIV alive and healthy – we need to make sure needed services are provided nationwide.

RECOMMENDATION: Guarantee a quality standard of care for all people living with AIDS and HIV through "mandatory minimum" care and formulary standards. A high standard of care for people with AIDS is a right.



Proposed Ryan White CARE Act Reauthorization Principles for Community Consideration

Coordinate Federal, State and Municipal Investments in HIV Care

A national response is required to provide HIV care nationwide, and we need to help poor states and regions get care where it's badly needed. An equitable funding model would recognize variations in wealth while requiring states to do their share – the variable Federal Medical Assistance Percentages (FMAP) in Medicaid is a good example. To adequately address emerging needs will requires increases in funding, not just the redistribution of already-inadequate resources.

RECOMMENDATION: Develop funding mechanisms to create more equitable distribution of CARE Act funds and leverage state and local investments. Taking care of low-income people with AIDS is a shared responsibility.

Strengthen Commitment to Supportive Services

Particularly for poor and homeless people, families with children, and those living with HIV and mental illness or chemical dependency, HIV treatment will succeed only if supportive AIDS services are available when and where they're needed.

RECOMMENDATION: Preserve and strengthen the federal commitment to coordinated supportive AIDS services, including housing, food & nutrition, transportation and legal services. The success of HIV care depends on vital support services.

Develop a New Comprehensive Domestic AIDS Response within Five Years

By 2010, the CARE Act will have been in existence for twenty years. Originally conceived as an emergency response, the CARE Act needs to be improved upon if our nation is to build a comprehensive twenty-first century public health response to the growing epidemic. This year's reauthorization should be the last.

RECOMMENDATION: Create a more comprehensive, effective and efficient response to the domestic AIDS epidemic for low-income and uninsured people living with AIDS and HIV by 2010 to ensure access to HIV care, treatment and supportive services for all. People with AIDS need more than the Ryan White CARE Act to survive.

Housing Works calls on advocates, legislators, and the Bush administration to build support for a consensus reauthorization plan that will ensure lifesaving quality HIV care to everyone in our nation living with AIDS and HIV.

Housing Works is the nation's largest community-based AIDS service and advocacy organization. We are a minority-controlled membership organization providing housing, healthcare, job training, and vital supportive services to homeless people with AIDS and HIV in New York City and operating full-time advocacy offices in Washington, DC, Albany and Brooklyn, NY. For more information call 202-408-0305 or email rwcaprinciples@housingworks.org.