

**TESTIMONY REGARDING RYAN WHITE CARE ACT REAUTHORIZATION  
U.S. HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES TOWN HALL  
NOVEMBER 10, 2005  
CHICAGO**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Gordon Schweigerdt and I am the founder and currently the Executive Vice President of C&M Pharmacy, LLC. I am certain that many of you in the audience today have heard of our company and know that over the past ten years it has been our privilege to be asked and to serve the pharmacy needs for thousands of individuals whose lives have been impacted by HIV/AIDS.

I have come here today to stand with you as an individual and as a member of the C&M family to ask our local, state and federal government to embrace in a bipartisan manner the reauthorization of the Ryan White CARE Act. The Ryan White CARE Act, by its very nature exists as a gateway into or a lighted path from which many of our fellow citizens will find continued medical treatment, prescription drug services, social services and housing needed to support their own life and in many cases the lives of family members which have become impacted by HIV/AIDS.

Not only have I come here this evening to ask our government at all levels to support the reauthorization of the Ryan White Care Act but to ask that the reauthorization of the act be set on a foundation of sound principals, good judgment and logical distribution of funding to make certain that the most good can be accomplished with the limited resources available. A productive extension of the Ryan White CARE Act for the state of Illinois and our nation must take into account the following:

1. The City of Chicago and its surrounding suburbs, like other major cities within this nation, account for the vast majority of all known and unknown cases of HIV/AIDS in this state. Proposed changes to the Ryan White Care Act that would vastly redistribute funding away from the focus of the epidemic would be irresponsible. Not only would an action of this very nature be irresponsible but it would make access to fundamental primary health care services less available for the greatest number in need. The derivative impact of an action of this very nature will also be negative and will also result in diminished levels of service capacity in the form of various supportive care such as case management, transportation and legal assistance. The capacity that will be lost will not be nebulous in its form or purpose. Rather, capacity lost will be in the very form of **INDIVIDUALS LOSING THEIR JOBS THAT WORK FOR THE VERY AGENCIES** that serve the communities most impacted.
2. Within the process of the reauthorization of this Act, we must not allow Illinois as a state to lose up to 25% or \$17 million of its current funding as proposed. It should be

obvious to all in attendance here that the \$70 million currently being received to support existing services is already inadequate. The reauthorization of this act must recognize that the availability and use of rapid testing has shown us that the number of individuals living with HIV and or AIDS is growing at a rate much faster than originally expected and greater funding, not less or redistributed funding for treatment and care is necessary.

3. Last, while no program is perfect, the Ryan White CARE Act is a good example of bipartisan legislation that has been instrumental in improving the quality and extension of life for individuals living with HIV/AIDS and or those impacted by it. Reauthorization of this act as an ongoing meaningful and valuable piece of legislation is an illustration to the world of our most admirable trait as Americans. That trait is our capacity to love and care for individuals in need. Care not in the form of pity but as an extension of hope and purpose which acting together are a catalyst that ignites a fire which spreads human spirit, pride and dignity.

In closing, I want address how important it is that this reauthorization be a bipartisan political effort. It is important that I inform the audience that for the vast majority of my life I have lived in the suburbs, attended church there, received my primary education there, and met and married my wife of fourteen years there. I am a college graduate of DePaul University and my personal political life has primarily traveled down a party path from where its origin can be drawn from some of the great names in our nation's history, names such as Lincoln and Roosevelt. I wanted everyone to understand my background in an effort to better illustrate the vast support the reauthorization of the Ryan White CARE Act has across this state and this nation. Perhaps more important, it will help illustrate to our local and national politicians from both sides of the aisle that we are watching you! Further, we are going penalize you by working hard to see that you are not re-elected if you choose to vote against the reauthorization or pass a version that does not address the primary needs of the epidemic itself and the people affected.

Thank you.

Gordon L. Schweigerdt  
Executive Vice President  
**C&M Pharmacy, LLC**