



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
JRTC, 100 West Randolph, Suite 16
Chicago, Illinois 60611

ROD BLAGOJEVICH
GOVERNOR

December 1, 2005

Dear Members of Congress:

In honor of World AIDS Day and on behalf of the estimated 35,000 Illinoisans living with HIV/AIDS, I write to ask for your commitment to reauthorize and increase federal appropriations for the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency (CARE) Act. As you know, the CARE Act expired on September 30, 2005, and legislation has yet to be introduced to reauthorize the program.

Illinois communities rely on more than \$70 million in federal CARE Act funding annually to provide essential medical and supportive services to low-income and under- or uninsured individuals living with HIV/AIDS. The programs the CARE Act funds are a crucial safety net for hundreds of thousands of people across the country. However, local needs far exceed available resources, which is why the State of Illinois commits matching State General Revenue funds to augment available federal resources for Illinois' fight against HIV/AIDS.

Without the commitment of the federal government to reauthorize and provide federal appropriations for the CARE Act and HIV prevention services, we cannot adequately fight the spread of this epidemic. Discretionary federal funding for HIV/AIDS-related services has stagnated over the past five years, while the number of Americans newly infected with HIV only continues to grow.

I urge you to work with your colleagues who serve on the U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee and the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions to draft legislation to reauthorize the CARE Act that adequately responds to the needs of our state. Changes such as redistributing funding away from high HIV prevalence states or limiting what can be spent on support services could result in a significant and destabilizing reduction in federal funds for Illinois, as well as a devastating decrease in the quality of life for people with HIV or AIDS.

Congress should also consider retaining the CARE Act's current "hold harmless" provisions for those states moving to name-based HIV reporting until HIV surveillance is sufficiently mature and complete throughout the U.S. for its effective use as a tool for distribution of funding.

Thank you for your work to ensure that the tens of thousands of HIV-positive Illinoisans have access to the valuable services provided by the Ryan White CARE Act. Please feel free to call on my administration if you should have any questions about HIV/AIDS-related service systems and client needs across our state.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Rod Blagojevich". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "R".

Governor, Illinois