

AIDS Foundation OF CHICAGO

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President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) congratulates you for signing into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Your immediate attention to revitalizing the U.S. economy will help improve the lives of the millions of Americans struggling to meet their basic needs, including those living with HIV/AIDS.

We especially commend your efforts and those of Congress to commit funding in the economic stimulus bill for evidence-based clinical and community-based prevention and wellness strategies. Such an investment is a sound way to stimulate the economy while building healthier communities. Health departments across the nation are experiencing destabilizing budget shortfalls that result in corresponding staffing and service reductions. By investing in the public health sector, your Administration has the opportunity to create and retain essential public health activities needed to advance efforts to prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

We therefore urge your Administration to fund HIV, STD, and viral hepatitis prevention activities as part of the \$650 million in stimulus spending designated for prevention and wellness. One-time HIV, STD, and hepatitis prevention investments will create thousands of jobs, help modernize and strengthen the country's public health infrastructure, and accelerate community prevention programs designed to curb the spread of these infectious diseases.

In debating the stimulus bill, some lawmakers questioned HIV and STD prevention as legitimate components of economic recovery and recommended instead separate legislation to address these critical needs. While disagreeing with the underlying assessment, we concur that HIV and STD prevention work should be prioritized and urge the White House to champion targeted funding increased for these activities in FY09 and FY10. With 19 million people in the U.S. becoming infected each year with STDs, including HIV, we cannot afford to neglect these humanitarian and cost-effective interventions.

Sincerely,



Mark Ishaug
President/ CEO

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