

AIDS Foundation OF CHICAGO

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February 11, 2009

The Honorable Richard Durbin
309 Hart Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Durbin:

On behalf of the more than 42,000 Illinoisans living with HIV/AIDS, the AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) is writing to express our profound disappointment in the U.S. Senate's decision to eliminate the \$5.8 billion Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Health departments across the country are reducing staff due to budget shortfalls, which results in fewer essential services provided to help keep Americans healthy. Investing in the public health sector creates and protects jobs, so desperately needed in this ailing economy, while building healthier communities by preventing an array of health concerns and communicable diseases, including HIV.

Among other important ways, stimulus funds could support local economies and promote secondary job creation through:

- Increasing the purchase of screening and diagnostic tests and laboratory equipment and supplies.
- Increasing the purchase of drugs and therapies for those diagnosed with HIV, TB, viral hepatitis and STDs.
- Reducing the loss of productivity and absenteeism due to complications of diseases.
- Increasing funding to nongovernmental organizations to deliver, monitor and evaluate services.

It is a grave misfortune that the development of jobs dedicated to improving and protecting the health of Americans were sidelined in the final Senate negotiations.

As members of the House-Senate conference committee prepare to negotiate the final version of the bill, we look to you as the Senate's Assistant Majority Leader to urge conferees to consider public health funding be included in the final bill. We especially ask that you please urge Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid to retain in the final legislation the House's provision for \$3 billion for Prevention and Wellness funds which include \$335 million for HIV, STD, TB, and Viral Hepatitis prevention.

Protecting, improving, and promoting the public's health is too important to be negotiated away. Thank you for your consideration and ongoing leadership in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Sincerely,



Mark Ishaug
President/CEO

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