



January 12, 2011

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the HIV Health and Human Services Planning Council of New York (Planning Council), I call on members of the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress to fully fund and implement the Affordable Care Act (ACA). This act is critical to the health and well-being of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA).

The Planning Council is comprised of health care and service providers, governmental representatives, advocates, and consumers. Members are very knowledgeable about the challenges of living with a chronic and sometimes fatal illness. Currently, only 17% of PLWHAs have private health insurance coverage. Nearly 30% have no insurance coverage at all. The ACA addresses these gaps in coverage by preventing insurers from denying coverage to children living with HIV/AIDS (as of September 2010) and adults living with HIV (as of 2014). It also prevents insurers from denying coverage or rescinding coverage and from imposing lifetime caps on insurance benefits. In addition, the ACA phases out the Medicare Part D “doughnut hole.” This year, beneficiaries will receive a 50% discount on brand-name medications while they are in the “doughnut hole.” AIDS Drug Assistance Program benefits, moreover, will be counted as contributions toward Medicare Part D’s true out of pocket expenses. Both of these changes will enhance PLWHAs’ ability to afford their life-saving medications.

Health care reform, moreover, includes a number of prevention and wellness provisions to reduce health disparities and new HIV infections. The populations most affected by HIV in the United States – African Americans, gay and bisexual men, Latinos, low-income individuals – all experience significant health disparities. ACA also expands initiatives to enhance cultural competency training for health care providers, thereby ensuring equitable treatment.

With enhanced access to prevention, treatment, and care, people living with HIV/AIDS will be able to remain productive members of the work force. They

will benefit financially and psychologically from employment and will also pay taxes, thereby helping the government to recoup some of the cost of care. With jobs, they will be able to remain in their homes and will be able to take steps to protect themselves and their partners from additional infections and complications of their condition. The Congressional Budget Office's analysis, moreover, estimated that repealing the ACA will add \$231 billion to the deficit. The United States will need to consider raising its debt ceiling again by the end of March with only \$335 billion left before we hit the ceiling. Adding \$231 billion to the deficit with the economy still lagging is not in the best interest of the United States.

The Affordable Care Act is a major step toward health equity and toward taming the explosion in health care costs in recent years. The HIV Health and Human Services Planning Council calls on Congress to support full and rapid implementation and funding of this essential and long overdue public policy. People who are already living with HIV and individuals who are vulnerable to becoming infected are among the populations who will derive tremendous benefit from full implementation.

Sincerely yours,



Matthew Lesieur  
Community Co-Chair