



May 20, 2005

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services and Education
184 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services and Education
123 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Specter and Ranking Member Harkin:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we are writing to urge you to include increased funding for federal programs to address the viral hepatitis C (HCV) epidemic in the FY2006 Labor, HHS and Education Appropriations legislation. The FY2006 appropriations process represents an opportunity for Congress to provide leadership in mounting an effective campaign against this, the number one blood-borne viral infection in the country. We respectfully request increased federal resources for hepatitis C prevention, medical management, treatment and research.

An estimated four million Americans have been infected with the hepatitis C virus (HCV) making it the most common, chronic, blood-borne disease in the United States. At least 2.7 million people in the U.S. are chronically infected with HCV. The most recent data available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicate that 25,000 to 30,000 new cases of HCV occur annually. Many people with chronic hepatitis C are unaware that

they are infected because HCV is often asymptomatic until advanced liver damage develops.

Chronic liver disease is among the top ten killers of Americans 25 years of age and older. Hepatitis C is the most common cause of chronic liver disease in the U.S., accounting for 40-60% of all cases. HCV is also the leading indication for adult liver transplantation in the U.S. Further, CDC estimates at least 25% of people living with HIV/AIDS are also infected with HCV. HIV accelerates HCV disease progression, and HIV/HCV co-infected persons have twice the risk of cirrhosis and a six-fold increased risk of liver failure compared to people with HCV alone. HCV-related liver disease is now the leading cause of death among people with HIV/AIDS.

The FY2006 Labor, HHS and Education Appropriation legislation represents an opportunity for Congress to provide critical funding to appropriately address the urgent hepatitis C epidemic facing our nation. As you craft the Labor, HHS, and Education Appropriations legislation for FY2006, please consider the following critical funding needs of viral hepatitis programs:

- \$10 million for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Division of Viral Hepatitis (DVH), *National Hepatitis C Prevention Strategy*;
- Full funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to support implementation of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases' (NIDDK) *Action Plan for Liver Disease Research*;
- Increased funding to the community health centers where a significant proportion of HCV infected adults seek their primary care;
- Increased funding under the Ryan White CARE Act to address the care and treatment needs of those co-infected with HIV and HCV; and
- Dedicated funding to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to integrate HCV primary and secondary prevention services into substance abuse and mental health treatment and prevention activities supported by SAMHSA grant programs.

A strong public health response is needed to meet the challenges of this infectious disease impacting four million Americans. We thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our recommendations. Please contact Laura Hanen at the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors at 202.434.8091 if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

AIDS Action Council, Washington, DC
AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Chicago, IL

AIDS Treatment Data Network, New York, NY
The AIDS Institute, Washington, DC
AIDS Community Care Team, Honolulu, HI
AIDS Response Seacoast, Portsmouth, NH
American Academy of HIV Medicine, Washington, DC
American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases, Washington, DC
American Gastroenterological Association, Washington, DC
American Liver Foundation, Washington, DC
American Liver Foundation – Hawaii Chapter, Honolulu, HI
American Social Health Association, Research Triangle Park, NC
The Andrew Ziegler Foundation, San Francisco, CA
Arizona Hepatitis C Coalition, Phoenix, AZ
Asian Liver Center at Stanford University, Stanford, CA
Asian Pacific AIDS Intervention Team, Los Angeles, CA
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations, Oakland, CA
Atlanta Harm Reduction Coalition, Atlanta, GA
Bangor STD Clinic, Bangor, ME
Bay Area Addiction Research and Treatment, Los Angeles, CA
California Hepatitis C Resource Center, Irvine, CA
Cascade AIDS Project, Portland, OR
The Catalyst Foundation, Lancaster, CA
Chicago Recovery Alliance, Chicago, IL
Community Health Resource Center, San Francisco, CA
Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project, New York, NY
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists, Atlanta, GA
Deck Mortricia Athens Drug Rehabilitation, Athens, GA
Drug Addiction Services of Hawaii, Honolulu, HI
Eastern Maine AIDS Network, Bangor, ME
Frannie Peabody Center, Portland, ME
GlaxoSmithKline, Philadelphia, PA
Harm Reduction Coalition, New York, NY
The Harm Reduction Project, Salt Lake City, UT
HEALS of North Georgia, Woodstock, GA
Hep C Advocate Network, Longview, TX
Hep-C ALERT, North Miami, FL
Hepatitis C Caring Ambassadors Program, Oregon City, OR
HepCats, Oahu's Hepatitis C & B Support Group, Honolulu, HI
Hep C Connection, Denver, CO
Hepatitis C Support Project, San Francisco, CA
Hepatitis Education Project, Seattle, WA
Hepatitis Hale Treatment and Support Program, Honolulu, HI
Hepatitis Prevention, Education, Treatment & Support Network of Hawaii, Honolulu, HI
Hepatitis Support Association, Houston, TX

The Immunization Action Coalition, St. Paul, MN
The International Community of Women Living with HIV and AIDS,
Washington, DC
Julia Spears Foundation, Franklin, TN
Latino Organization for Liver Awareness, Bronx, NY
Lifelong AIDS Alliance, Seattle, WA
LiverHope, Minnetonka, MN
Maricopa County Department of Public Health, Phoenix, AZ
Michigan Hepatitis C Foundation, Grand Rapids, MI
Michigan Society for Infection Control, Beverly Hills, MI
Missouri Hepatitis C Alliance, Columbia, MO
National AIDS Treatment Advocacy Project, New York, NY
National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors, Washington, DC
National Association of Community Health Centers, Washington, DC
National Association of County and City Health Officials, Washington, DC
National Association of People with AIDS, Silver Spring, MD
National Association of Social Workers, Washington, DC
National Coalition of STD Directors, Washington, DC
National Hepatitis C Advocacy Council, Seattle, WA
National Minority AIDS Council, Washington, DC
The National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable, Atlanta, GA
Organization to Achieve Solutions in Substance-Abuse, Oakland, CA
Physicians' Research Network, New York, NY
Positive Health Project, New York, NY
Project Inform, San Francisco, CA
Recovery Consultants of Atlanta, Atlanta, GA
Roche Pharmaceuticals, Nutley, NJ
Roseburg Risk Reduction, Roseburg, OR
San Francisco AIDS Foundation, San Francisco, CA
Seattle & King County Department of Public Health, Seattle, WA
The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States,
Washington, D.C.
Spokane AIDS Network, Spokane, WA
Title II Community AIDS National Network, New York, NY
Treatment Access Expansion Project, Silver Spring, MD
Treatment Action Group, New York, NY
Utah AIDS Foundation, Salt Lake City, UT
Valeant Pharmaceuticals International, Costa Mesa, CA
Washington State Medical Association, Seattle, WA
West Oahu Hope for A Cure Foundation, Ewa Beach, HI



May 20, 2005

The Honorable Ralph Regula
Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services and Education
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Obey
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services and Education
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Regula and Ranking Member Obey:

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