

until it's over
AIDS ACTION

October 20, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of AIDS Action Council, whose members provide or administer HIV/AIDS care, treatment, and prevention services nationwide, I write to commend you for your leadership in addressing the critical issues of health care in the United States and to express AIDS Action's support for the core principles of health care reform that you have put forth. As the Congress moves to the next phase of assembling the final bills that will be taken to the full House of Representatives and the full Senate, we urge your support for strong provisions on prevention, wellness, and public health such as those included in the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pension Committee's Affordable Health Choices Act. Enactment of the provisions will go a long way in shifting the scope of our health care system from a narrow focus on illness to a broader focus on the prevention of illness and injury and health promotion. Such a shift in focus is essential to stopping the spread of HIV and ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) revised estimate of new HIV infections shows an estimated 55,400 new HIV infections annually since 2003. The impact of new infections continues to fall heavily on African American and Hispanic communities, especially women, and gay men and men who have sex with men of all races. Thirty-eight percent of the estimated annual new infections since 2003 have occurred among young people aged 13-29 years. HIV infection is completely preventable and the number of new infections is a clear indication of the need for increased attention to prevention and public health efforts.

As we draw closer to realizing your goal of comprehensive health care reform legislation, we are hopeful that the HELP Committee's commendable focus on prevention, wellness, and public health will serve as a foundation for final legislation. AIDS Action Council is committed to working with you and your Administration and Congressional leaders to accomplish this important goal.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Haag
Executive Director

cc: The Honorable Harry Reid
The Honorable Max Baucus
The Honorable Tom Harkin
The Honorable Christopher Dodd
Jeffrey Crowley