

February 14, 2007

The Honorable Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2264 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hilda L. Solis  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1414 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Donna Christian-Christensen  
Delegate, Virgin Islands  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1510 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michael M. Honda  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1713 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Kilpatrick, Solis, Honda and Delegate Christian-Christensen:

We, the undersigned organizations, are concerned about the unintended consequences of implementing changes to the Minority AIDS Initiative (MAI) portion of the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Modernization Act of 2006. We understand that the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) plans to significantly delay the availability of Ryan White MAI funds until possibly August or later, which would result in a six or seven month delay in funds. Just as troubling, HRSA is also considering changing the grant year from March 1<sup>st</sup> to when monies are made available in August or September. A change in grant year would leave jurisdictions without the ability to use other funds to float the MAI programs until new notices of MAI grant awards are issued.

We urge you to do whatever possible to work with the Administration to persuade it to **reconsider the decision to delay the availability of funds and the change in grant year**, as this will seriously jeopardize the ability of states, localities and non-profit organizations to provide uninterrupted availability of Ryan White MAI funded services.

Through a combination of formula, supplemental and MAI funds, localities are able to cobble together a comprehensive HIV/AIDS service delivery system. Of critical importance to ensuring that services are available and access to care is not interrupted, is the reliable availability of funds. **The decision by the Administration to delay the issuance MAI funds until much later in the grant year will seriously strain the ability of Title I funded programs to provide interrupted availability of services.** In addition, many jurisdictions use their Minority AIDS Initiative funds to provide direct services to communities of color. **For Title I localities, whose grant year ends on February 28, 2007, a decision to delay the awarding of MAI funds until August or later will directly result in the termination of services to this population. Clearly, this is not what was intended by Congress.**

**Many organizations operate on a tight shoestring budget; any interruption in funding jeopardizes many non-profits ability to function and provide services. Lack of access to many critically needed services, such as case management, treatment adherence support, mental health or substance abuse services, will quickly spiral into a lack of adherence to HIV treatment regimens.** All this can be avoided by executing changes in the new Ryan White law in a more prudent and fiscally responsible fashion.

We urge you to consider advocating a number of possible solutions to this problem, including (but not limited to):

- Persuading the Administration to continue distributing Minority AIDS Initiative funds based on the methodology in the 2000 CARE Act until HRSA is prepared to quickly and immediately distribute MAI funds based on changes in the new law; or
- Make the grant year for MAI effective March 1, 2007, not when HRSA chooses to issue notices of grant awards in August or September. This will allow programs to use alternative funding sources (such as formula funds) in anticipation of being able to reimburse those alternative sources with MAI monies once they become available.

We hope you share our concern for continuity in service delivery, urge you to do whatever you can to ensure the uninterrupted availability of Ryan White MAI funding.

Sincerely,