

July 9, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Transmitted via email

Dear Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the HIV medical providers who serve our nation, the Ryan White Medical Providers Coalition (RWMPC) and HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA) urge you to provide emergency funding for the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program in the next COVID-19 package to support people living with HIV during this national emergency. Additionally, we urge you to continue to robustly fund the Ryan White Program and related HIV programs, including the Administration's Ending HIV as an Epidemic (EHE) initiative, in the FY21 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) appropriations bill. RWMPC is a national coalition that represents HIV medical providers working in clinics supported in part by the Ryan White Program, and HIVMA is a national association of almost 5,000 HIV health care providers and researchers that promotes quality HIV care informed by science and social justice.

Specifically, we request that Congress allocate **\$500 million for the Ryan White Program across all of its parts in the next COVID-19 package**. As infectious diseases and HIV experts, Ryan White providers are on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic, and they need additional emergency funding to meet the pressing needs of people living with HIV. Ryan White patients are vulnerable to the dangers of COVID-19, as they share a number of risk factors with individuals who are more likely to die of the disease, including underlying conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and chronic lung disease, in addition to other factors including systematic racism and poor or no insurance coverage.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ryan White Program is providing housing and food support to an increasing number of patients who are experiencing impoverishment from the dramatic economic downturn. Ryan White clinical teams are providing care and treatment via telehealth as well as access to medication and increased case management. Additional funding is needed to continue this support as the COVID-19 pandemic endures. It is essential to ensure provider availability as reduced revenues and state and local funding cuts threaten staffing at public health departments, academic medical centers, community health centers, and community-based programs nationwide.

Finally, we urge Congress to fully fund the Ryan White Program and related HIV programs in the FY21 LHHHS appropriations bill to ensure that progress on ending the domestic HIV epidemic continues next year. As a *Washington Post* articleⁱ recently described, this important public health goal is at risk of slipping due to COVID-19, and a focus on HIV needs to continue to maintain the gains achieved in recent years. FY21 funding requests for new, additional funding (and not a repurposing of current resources) include:

- **\$225.1 million for Part C of the Ryan White Program** to support approximately 350 HIV medical clinics across the nation that provide comprehensive and effective HIV care and treatment to more than 300,000 patients annually.
- **\$302 million for HRSA’s Ending HIV as an Epidemic (EHE) initiative**, including **\$165 million** for the Ryan White Program to provide additional HIV care and treatment, as well as **\$137 million** for the Bureau of Primary Health Care to provide HIV prevention services, including Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), medication that prevents HIV infection.
- **\$58 million for CDC to address the infectious diseases consequences of the opioid epidemic**. This funding would ensure access to harm reduction services next year as the nation continues to battle the opioid epidemic, including overdose deaths and serious infectious diseases consequences: HIV, viral hepatitis B and C, endocarditis (heart infection) as well as sexually transmitted infections.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these important funding requests, and for your leadership on our nation’s response to the intersecting epidemics of HIV/AIDS, substance use disorder and its deadly consequences, and COVID-19. If you have questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Jenny Collier, RWMPC Convener, at jcollier@colliercollective.org, or Andrea Weddle, HIVMA Executive Director, at aweddle@hivma.org.

Sincerely,



Anna Person, M.D.
RWMPC Co-Chair



Judith Feinberg, M.D., FIDSA
Chair, HIV Medicine Association

ⁱBernstein, Lenny, “When One Pandemic Disrupts Another: The Story of the Coronavirus and HIV,” *The Washington Post*, July 6, 2020: https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/when-one-pandemic-disrupts-another-the-story-of-the-coronavirus-and-hiv/2020/07/05/c6e91d14-bd3d-11ea-80b9-40ece9a701dc_story.html