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The Ryan White CARE Act: Celebrating 25 Years of Success

*CAEAR Coalition Applauds the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program and its Role in
Securing the Health of Thousands of People Living with HIV/AIDS*

Washington, DC, August 6, 2015—"I came face to face with death at thirteen years old," declared Ryan White, the Indiana teen who confronted HIV stigma and ignorance as an activist and educator at the height of AIDS hysteria in the 1980s. "I was diagnosed with AIDS: a killer, but it was my decision to live a normal life, go to school, be with my friends, and enjoy day to day activities." This month the CAEAR Coalition celebrates the life of Ryan White and the many victories in the fight against HIV/AIDS resulting from the passage of the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency (CARE) Act twenty-five years ago.

"Ryan White and I have walked the same ground," said Jan Carl Park, Chair of the CAEAR Coalition. "Having lived in Indiana, I am all too familiar with Ryan's story and have seen first-hand the prejudice and fear that accompany HIV/AIDS. As a person living with HIV for three decades, Ryan White's advocacy set a path for me from which, to this day, I am healthy and strong."

Born December 6, 1971, Ryan White died at the age of 18 on April 8, 1990. Passed only a few months after his death, the Ryan White CARE Act was signed into law by President George W. Bush on August 18. This seminal legislation is the single largest federal program designed specifically for people with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in the U.S. For the past quarter century, bipartisan congressional support for the Ryan White Program is universally recognized as a national success story, one that Ryan White did not live to see.

Ryan White-funded Programs are credited with saving thousands of lives by ensuring medical care and other essential services to over half a million individuals and families each year who do not have adequate insurance coverage or personal assets to cope with the disease¹.

Following the legislation's passage, the CAEAR Coalition quickly became the first and foremost advocacy organization for cities and jurisdictions hardest hit by the HIV epidemic. Since then, the Coalition has been a key player in each of the Ryan White Program's congressional reauthorizations, most recently in 2009. CAEAR Coalition members know first-hand how crucial the program has been in providing care and treatment for those most in need. The program's successes are well documented:

- PLWHA receiving at least one HIV medical care visit through Ryan White have higher rates of retention in care and viral suppression, with 82.2% retained in HIV medical care. Viral suppression is higher among retained clients (77.7%) versus clients who were not retained (58.3%).
- The Ryan White Programs are leading innovators, transforming best practices for healthcare delivery by emphasizing the entire care continuum to identify and address treatment gaps, including mental health and other essential services that affect health outcomes.
- Out of 1,016 federal programs, Ryan White is one of only seven to receive a score of 100% in Program Results and Accountability from the Office of Management and Budget's Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART).
- More than 70% of all people living with HIV/AIDS in the U.S. reside in a Part A community. Part A serves an estimated 300,000 people living with HIV/AIDS each year.
- Ryan White Part C funds sustain community health centers and clinics where over 247,000 persons living with HIV/AIDS receive medical care each year.

- Ryan White Programs bring jobs and economic development to low income communities and sparsely populated rural areas, with a large, urban community health center generating an estimated economic impact of \$21.6 million and employing 281 people, and a small, rural health center creating an estimated economic impact of \$3.9 million and employing 52 people.
- Ryan White-funded programs have successfully led the way in community-based responses to HIV to negotiate recent advances, including Treatment as Prevention (TasP), Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) and PrEP.

“The Ryan White Program’s history of accomplishments for public health and people living with HIV/AIDS is a wonderful legacy for the U.S. Congress and a great model of bipartisan cooperation,” declared Mr. Park. “Over the past 25 years, significant inroads have been made in the battle against HIV, and the Ryan White Program continues to be the cornerstone as we build on those bio-medical advances and best practices.”

“However, there is still more work to be done,” he added. “Medicaid reform and the impact of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the way in which the Ryan White Program will need to integrate and complement public and private health insurance coverage is a work in progress. What is indisputable is that as the ACA is further implemented and the HIV community works toward the National HIV/AIDS Strategy’s goal of an AIDS-free generation, the Ryan White Program will continue as the indispensable safety net for thousands of low-income, uninsured, or underinsured people living with HIV/AIDS.”

According to Ernest Hopkins, Policy Chair of the CAEAR Coalition, “The HIV community is grateful for all that has been achieved, but to honor the legacy of Ryan White and all those we have lost to this disease, we must continue to address the challenges—challenges that include an unacceptably high number of new HIV infections annually in the U.S. (50,000) and an unacceptably high rate of new infections among people of color, among very low-income individuals, and among people living in underserved areas of the U.S. As a result, the CAEAR Coalition will continue to be a strong national voice that advocates for an effective federal response to meet the care, treatment, support, and prevention needs of people living with HIV/AIDS and the organizations that serve them.”

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Ryan White Program, visit <http://hab.hrsa.gov/ryanwhite25/>. Read “Ryan White: My Own Story” at http://reading.mostreadbook.website/books/530874.Ryan_White.html

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The Communities Advocating Emergency AIDS Relief (CAEAR) Coalition was formed in the early 1990s by representatives of the initial 16 CARE Act Title I (Part A) cities, including Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, and Washington. In 1997, the CAEAR Coalition and the National Title III (Part C) Coalition joined forces to provide coordinated national advocacy for Part A and Part C resources and, in 2003, CAEAR Coalition began its advocacy for the Part B/ADAP program as well as Part F AIDS Education and Training Centers. Today, CAEAR Coalition continues its role as the leading national membership organization that advocates for federal policy, legislation, regulations, and appropriations to meet the care, treatment, support and prevention needs of people living with HIV/AIDS and the organizations that serve them, focusing on health care reform and the evolving role of the Ryan White Program. Learn more at www.caeear.org.

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, HIV/AIDS Bureau. (November 2014). *Striving for an AIDS-Free Generation: 2014 Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Highlight*. <http://hab.hrsa.gov/data/files/2015report.pdf>