



1101 South Main Street, #2500
Fort Worth, Texas 76104

15 August 2009

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison
500 Chestnut Street
Suite 1570
Abilene, Texas 79602

Dear Senator Hutchison:

I am writing as the Chair of the North Central Texas HIV Planning Council. We are responsible for planning, evaluating and allocating resources for the 38-county region in north central Texas, which encompasses parts of your district. There are over 3,500 persons in our region who are receiving HIV treatment and care. Every county in our region - your district - has HIV+ persons who receive this care. The Planning Council is comprised of community health care workers, medical experts and dedicated, concerned individuals who volunteer their time and skills to insure funding and services are targeted to the areas of greatest need in a manner which is fiscally responsible. Our membership is reflective of the region, very diverse in all aspects including political parties.

On behalf of the clients, 12 agencies who provide services, HIV administration and planning staff, and over 50 persons who volunteer for the Planning Council, I write to request a swift extension of the current Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Modernization Act, which is set to expire on September 30, 2009.

The Ryan White Program plays a pivotal role in providing people living with HIV and AIDS with the care and treatment they need and deserve. Our region receives approximately \$6.7 million per year from the Ryan White legislation to serve the 3,500 clients - an average of approximately \$2,000 per client per year for HIV care - a very stewardship of the funds. These funds support medical and medically based services. They do not support programs such as candlelight suppers, dog sitting or lobbying, as has been misstated by various sources.

We are greatly alarmed that with the September 30th deadline looming, no action has been taken by Congress to extend Ryan White legislation and ensure that our programs do not experience service disruptions. If the legislation is not approved, the care and medical treatment for these clients will not go away. HIV+ persons will still need these services, which most would need to obtain through the public hospitals and emergency rooms. The cost for providing HIV care from these strained systems would be approximately 8 times higher (\$16,000 per person per year) than through the efficient programs we coordinate in the region.

On behalf of North Central Texas HIV Planning Council and region, and those we serve, I ask that you urge your colleagues on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee to act immediately to extend the Ryan White legislation for three more years with the recommended changes in the Community Consensus Document (enclosed) which has been endorsed by over 270 organizations across the country.

I thank you in advance for doing everything you can to safeguard Ryan White funds for our region. Please feel free to contact me regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Sylvia Alonzo Rawlings
Chair, North Central Texas HIV Planning Council

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Encl: Ryan White Extension Community Consensus Document