



November 17, 2008

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
Chair; Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
644 Dirksen Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

We, the Chief Elected Officials of the Texas Ryan White Program Part A grantees urge Congress and the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee to act now to extend the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Modernization Act of 2006 through September 30, 2012. We make this request because:

- The full impact of the 2006 Reauthorization of the Ryan White Program has not been realized yet (e.g., funding analysis; grantee and sub-grantee impact, including the implementation of the 75% core medical / 25% supportive services requirement and related service definitions; impact of codification of the Ryan White portion of Minority AIDS Initiative (MAI) funding and remaining outstanding 2006 implementation issues);
- Reliable client-level data and mature HIV reporting systems will not be in place by 2009. The Health Resource Services Administration (HRSA) has not yet implemented its mandated national client-level data collection systems yet. Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has stated that until their 2012 surveillance report is released, they do not anticipate sufficiently mature HIV reporting data from all states that can be included in the national database used to determine awards; and
- Provisions of the 2006 law that will have a dramatic impact on funding and services (i.e., carryover penalties for Part A and B grantees, redistribution of funds, and loss of supplemental funds) will at best not be clear fewer than six months before the end of the current Reauthorization period.

An extension of the law would need to include amending dates and removing language that does not allow provisions to exist beyond FY 2009, including those related to the status of the Transitional Grant Areas and Eligible Metropolitan Areas. If these changes are not made, service delivery and client care will be severely disrupted and will negatively impact the already strained public healthcare system. A thorough review of the law by Congress is necessary to ensure that it is extended appropriately. We recommend this process begin soon in order to identify any barriers or unintended consequences, and ensure that client services are not interrupted after September 30, 2009.

We understand Congress must take some action to extend the Ryan White Program to ensure the program remains in effect after September 30, 2009. Given the transition to a new Administration and Congress, and the tight timeline remaining for extending the Program, we believe the number of topic-specific changes considered in Reauthorization should at this crucial time be limited solely to necessary changes related to the timeline for implementation and/or expiration.

The Texas Ryan White Part A and B grantees stand united in this request to extend the current legislation with modifications made to the timetable to best serve our HIV-positive clients and meet the intent of the legislation. We offer our resources and look forward to working with you on moving the extension process of the Ryan White Program forward. We appreciate your leadership and the efforts of your staff for their continued efforts in advocating on behalf of people living with HIV/AIDS and particularly for the Ryan White legislation.

Sincerely,



Will Wynn, Mayor, Austin, Texas



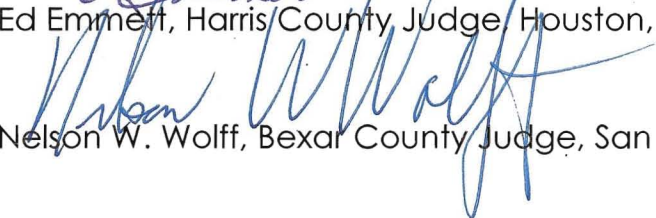
Jim Foster, Dallas County Judge, Dallas, Texas



B. Glen Whitley, Tarrant County Judge, Fort Worth, Texas



Ed Emmett, Harris County Judge, Houston, Texas



Nelson W. Wolff, Bexar County Judge, San Antonio, Texas

cc: Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison, Honorable John Cornyn