

PRESIDENTIAL

August 19, 1998

ADVISORY

COUNCIL ON

HIV/AIDS

The Honorable William Jefferson Clinton
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On August 3, 1998, Congressmen Richard Gephardt and Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi along with 66 of their colleagues sent a letter to Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala "urging her to expand Medicaid to low-income people who are HIV-positive but have not yet developed symptoms of HIV disease." New research released at the 12th World AIDS Conference in Geneva this past June provides strong evidence that early treatment of HIV infection is both medically beneficial and cost effective.

Over the past year, there has been deep concern over the Administration's lack of progress in allowing more low-income Americans with HIV access to new AIDS drug therapies. On April 10, 1997, Vice President Gore asked the Health Care Financing Administration to study the feasibility of expanding Medicaid to provide earlier Medicaid coverage for HIV-infected people. As recent as December 9, 1997, Vice President Gore stated that he was "extremely disappointed" that this could not be done, while stressing that "this Administration understands the urgency of finding innovative ways to ensure that all people with HIV benefit from the promise of new and effective treatments." Your Advisory Council has recommended such expansion since December 1996, and has supported the Administration's efforts to date to make this important medical treatment available to those who can least afford it.

We urge you to support Congress's efforts by directing the Secretary of Health and Human Services to expand Medicaid eligibility for life saving therapies for people with HIV disease. We know that this is the right thing to do.

Sincerely,

Original Signed 8/19/98

R. Scott Hitt, M.D.
Chair

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cc: The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
The Honorable Richard Gephardt