

PRESIDENTIAL

ADVISORY

October 28, 1998

COUNCIL ON

HIV/AIDS

The Honorable William Jefferson Clinton
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Mr. President:

As members of your Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS, we are writing to request that you include in your FY 2000 budget a request to Congress for increased funding for the full HIV/AIDS portfolio.

Thanks to your strong support for increased HIV/AIDS funding, as well as the leadership of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees and Congressional Black Caucus members, the omnibus spending agreement signed into law last week includes substantial increases in HIV/AIDS funding for FY 1999. We want to thank you and others in your Administration who advocated for this funding, which, as you know, includes for the first time ever, more than \$110 million in dedicated funding to address HIV/AIDS among African-Americans. We specifically want to thank you for using the visibility and leadership of your office to bring attention to the HIV/AIDS crisis facing communities of color and to urge a renewed national response to fighting the epidemic.

As the growing toll of this epidemic continues to fall disproportionately upon people of color, and historically disenfranchised communities, the nation's financial investment in preventing new infections, caring for those who are living with HIV disease and research must remain vigilant. Despite dramatic progress in reducing the number of AIDS-related deaths, African-Americans, Latinos and other communities of color are not experiencing comparable levels of reduction. These communities, which also have disproportionately high rates of most other chronic diseases, must be targeted with increased resources if we are to achieve your goal of ending racial and ethnic disparities in health outcomes.

As you finalize your FY 2000 budget request to Congress, we urge that you build upon this considerable momentum. As you know, the impact of HIV disease on our nation cannot be rectified or mitigated in a single year or even a few years. In response to the fact that HIV/AIDS is a long-term crisis, which requires a sustained investment, we ask that your FY 2000 budget reflect a commitment to further expand financial support for federal HIV care and treatment, housing, prevention, research and international efforts.

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- Absent a cure or vaccine, well-targeted and sustained HIV prevention programs and guaranteed access to substance abuse treatment for those who request it are our best hope for stemming the tide of new infections. As you know, the majority of the estimated 40,000 HIV new infections each year are among people of color, gay and bisexual men, and injection drug users and their partners. We request your support for an overall increase in HIV prevention funding at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as your support for targeted programs for Latinos and other communities of color, using the African-American initiative as a model.
- Recent federal statistics that show a 47% decline in AIDS-related deaths between 1996 and 1997, demonstrate that ensuring access to health care and HIV drug treatments saves thousands of lives each year. Both the CARE Act (including the AIDS Drug Assistance Program) and Medicaid programs will continue to play a strong role in such successes, and we urge your continued support for full funding and increased access to both programs.
- By stabilizing individuals' lives and facilitating access to consistent care, HIV support services such as those funded through the CARE Act and Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS program improve both the overall health outcomes and quality of life of people living with HIV disease.
- We applaud your commitment to continued increases in funding for the National Institutes of Health, including HIV/AIDS research coordinated through the Office of AIDS Research. The Council is particularly gratified that Dr. Neal Nathanson, Director of the Office of AIDS Research, has identified vaccine development as the nation's number one AIDS research priority, and we strongly urge that substantial new funding be directed toward this global public health imperative. The Council reiterates its strong support for research on microbicides.
- Finally, the United States must continue to play a leadership role in global HIV prevention and treatment efforts, both by sharing its expertise, as well as through its increased financial support for international HIV programs funded through the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Each of the federal programs identified above is critical to the nation's comprehensive approach to HIV/AIDS. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

(Original signed by RSH on 10/28/98)

R. Scott Hitt, M.D.
Chair

Presidential Advisory Council on HIV and AIDS

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Ms. Judith Billings
Mr. Charles Blackwell
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cc: The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
The Honorable Richard Gephardt