

July 6, 2009

The Honorable David R. Obey
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Appropriations Committee
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Appropriations Committee
2441 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiahrt:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations we are writing to urge you to **increase funding for viral hepatitis prevention** in the FY2010 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill. Hepatitis B and C affect six million Americans, the vast majority of which do not know they are infected, and can lead to chronic liver disease, cirrhosis, liver cancer and liver failure that claim 15,000 lives each year. We appreciate the Committee's past support for the viral hepatitis program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which currently receives \$18.3 million and was once as high as \$25 million.

President Obama's budget proposal includes a \$51,000 increase for the Division of Viral Hepatitis (DVH) at CDC, which is woefully insufficient to address infectious diseases of this magnitude. **We are requesting an increase of \$31.7 million for a total of \$50 million in FY2010.** While operating on the smallest Division budget for the prevention of infectious diseases within CDC, DVH will never be able to fully prevent and manage these epidemics under its current fiscal constraints. States and cities receive an average funding award from DVH of \$90,000. This is only enough for a single staff position and is not sufficient for the provision of core prevention services that are essential to preventing new infections, increasing the number of people who know they are infected, and following up to help those identified to remain healthy and productive. We believe this increase is an important first step to making hepatitis prevention services more widely available. The expanded services should include hepatitis B and C education, counseling, testing, and referral in addition to delivering hepatitis A and B vaccine, and establishing a surveillance system of chronic hepatitis B and C.

It is absolutely essential and urgent that we act aggressively to address the threat of viral hepatitis in the United States. In 2007 alone, the CDC estimated that 43,000 Americans were newly infected with hepatitis B and 17,000 with hepatitis C. Unfortunately, it is believed that these estimates of hepatitis B and C infections are just the tip of the iceberg. Most people living with hepatitis B and over three-fourths of people living with hepatitis C do not know that they are infected. It is estimated that the baby boomer population currently accounts for two out of every three cases of chronic hepatitis C. It is also estimated that this epidemic will increase costs by billions of dollars to our private insurers and public systems of health such as Medicare and Medicaid, and account for billions lost due to decreased productivity from the millions of American workers suffering from chronic hepatitis B and C.

As you continue to draft the FY2010 Labor-HHS Appropriations bill, we ask that you consider a generous increase for viral hepatitis prevention to counter several years of flat or inadequate growth in funding. A strong public health response is needed to meet the challenges of these costly infectious diseases. The viral hepatitis community welcomes the opportunity to work with you and your staff on this important issue and to ensure a funding increase by Congress to DVH. Please contact Colin Schwartz with the Hepatitis C Appropriations Partnership at 202.434.8005 or cschwartz@NASTAD.org if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

A Community Resource Network (ACORN), Lebanon, NH
After Hours Project, Brooklyn, NY
AIDS Action Baltimore, Baltimore, MD
AIDS Action Council, Washington, DC
AIDS Alabama, Birmingham, AL
AIDS Community Research Initiative of America, New York, NY
AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Chicago, IL
AIDS Project Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA
AIDS Support Network, San Luis Obispo, CA
AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland, Cleveland, OH
AIDS Treatment Activists Coalition, Boston, MA
AIDS Treatment Data Network, New York, NY
American Academy of HIV Medicine, Washington, DC
American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases, Alexandria, VA
American Liver Foundation, New York, NY
Arizona Hepatitis C Coalition, Phoenix, AZ
Asian Health Coalition of Illinois, Chicago, IL
Asian Health Services, Oakland, CA
Asian Liver Center at Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA
Asian Pacific Community in Action, Phoenix, AZ
Asian Pacific Liver Center (APLC), Los Angeles, CA
AsianWeek Foundation, San Francisco CA
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO), Oakland, CA
B Free CEED: National Center of Excellence in the Elimination of Hepatitis B Disparities, New York, NY
Boat People SOS, Inc., Falls Church, VA
Bosco's Buddies Inc, Oceanport, NJ
Boulder County AIDS Project, Boulder, CO
CAB Health & Recovery Services, Lynn, MA
California Hepatitis Alliance (CalHEP), Sacramento, CA
California Prison Focus, Oakland, CA
Caring Ambassadors Program, Inc., Oregon City, OR
Center for Health Justice, West Hollywood, CA

Center for the Study of Hepatitis C, Weill Cornell Medical College, New York, New York
Chicago Recovery Alliance, Chicago, IL
Chinatown Service Center, Los Angeles, CA
CitiWide Harm Reduction, Bronx, NY
Community Health Action of Staten Island, Staten Island, NY
Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project (CHAMP), Providence, RI
Community HIV/Hepatitis Advocates of Iowa Network (CHAIN), IA
Doorways, St. Louis, MO
Education for Healthy Choices, Sacramento, CA
Family Services Network of New York, Inc., Brooklyn, NY
Foundation for Research on Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Inc (FROST'D), New York, NY
Georgia Doty Health Education Fund, Chicago, IL
H.E.A.L.S of the South (Hepatitis Education Awareness and Liver Support), Tallahassee, FL
Harlem United Community AIDS Center, Inc., New York, NY
Harm Reduction Center of Southern Oregon, Roseburg, OR
Harm Reduction Coalition, New York, NY
Heartland CARES, Inc., Paducah, KY
Hep C Connection, Denver, CO
Hep Help of New Jersey Alliance, Inc., New Jersey City, NJ
Hepatitis B Coalition of WA, WithinReach, Seattle, WA
Hepatitis B Foundation, Doylestown, PA
Hepatitis C Association, Scotch Plains, NJ
Hepatitis C Support Project, San Francisco, CA
Hepatitis Education Project, Seattle, WA
Hepatitis Foundation International, Silver Spring, MD
Hepatitis Support Association, Houston, TX
hepCmeditations project, Seattle WA and San Francisco, CA
HIPS (Helping Individual Prostitutes Survive), Washington, DC
HIV/AIDS Services for African Americans in Alaska, Anchorage, AK
HIVictorious, Inc., Madison, WI
Immunization Action Coalition, St. Paul, MN
Los Angeles County Hepatitis B Coalition, Los Angeles, CA
Los Angeles Hepatitis Intervention Project (LA HIP), Los Angeles, CA
Lower East Side Harm Reduction Center, New York, NY
Marin Treatment Center, San Rafael, CA
Maryland Hepatitis Coalition, Baltimore, MD
Mexican American Alcoholism Program (MAAP), Inc., Sacramento, CA
Michigan AIDS Coalition, Ferndale, MI
Missouri AIDS Task Force, St. Louis, MO
Mo Hepatitis C Alliance, Columbia, MO
National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors, Washington, DC
National Association of People With AIDS (NAPWA), Washington, DC
National Coalition of STD Directors, Washington, DC
National Hepatitis C Advocacy Council, Brooklyn, NY

National Minority AIDS Council, Washington, DC
National Organization for the Advancement of Chamorro People (NOACP), Long Beach, CA
National Task Force on Hepatitis B: Focus on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders,
Palo Alto, CA
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable, Atlanta, GA
Nebraska AIDS Project, Omaha, NE
North Shore Health Project, Gloucester, MA
NYC AIDS Housing Network (NYCAHN), Brooklyn, NY
O'Connor Hospital HCV + HBV Support Group, Delhi, NY
OraSure Technologies Inc., Bethlehem, PA
Pierce County AIDS Foundation, Tacoma, WA
Portland Overdose Prevention Project, Portland, OR
Positive Health Project, Inc., New York, NY
Project Inform, San Francisco, CA
Safe Horizon, New York, NY
San Francisco Hep B Free, San Francisco CA
San Luis Obispo County Hepatitis C Project, San Luis Obispo, CA
South Side Help Center, Chicago, IL
St. Ann's Corner of Harm Reduction, Bronx, NY
St. Vincents HCV Support Group, Manhattan, NY
Status C Unknown, Medford, NY
Tacoma Pierce County Health Department, Tacoma, WA
The AIDS Institute, Washington, DC
The Center for Health Improvement (CHI), Sacramento, CA
The Community Access National Network (CANN), Washington, DC
Treatment Action Group (TAG), New York, NY
UHAP / Upstate New York Hepatitis C Awareness Project, Delancey, NY
Urban Health Epidemiology Program, SUNY Downstate College of Medicine, Brooklyn, New York
Village Care of New York, New York, NY
Visionary Health Concepts, Gardiner, NY
Voices of Community Advocates and Leaders (VOCAL), Brooklyn, NY

cc: House Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee Members

This document was prepared by the Hepatitis C Appropriations Partnership (HCAP). HCAP was formed in June 2004 as a coalition that represents hepatitis community-based organizations, public health officials, health providers, national HIV and hepatitis organizations, and diagnostic and pharmaceutical companies. We work with policy makers and public health officials to increase federal leadership and support for viral hepatitis prevention, testing,

education, research, medical management and treatment. For more information, please contact Colin Schwartz at 202.434.8005 or cschwartz@nastad.org.