until it's over
AIDS ACTION

November 4, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
US House of Representatives
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madame Speaker:

AIDS Action Council is pleased to support HR 3962, the Affordable Health Care for America Act. We believe that health care reform is critical to the health of all people living with HIV/AIDS in the United States. Access to affordable healthcare keeps those people living with HIV from progressing to AIDS. It keeps HIV positive individuals in the workforce longer and extends the life span of many positive individuals.

We applaud the House for including the Early Treatment for HIV Act (ETHA) in the legislation. In our society one should not have to wait until you are severely ill before you can access lifesaving care, treatment and medicine. Giving states the option to cover low income individuals who are living with HIV access to Medicaid services is extremely important. The inclusion of AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) payments as True Out of Pocket (TrOOP) costs by 2011 is also a significant provision that will provide many individuals with HIV and AIDS access to their medication and ensure that ADAPs truly remain the payer of last resort.

As you know, HIV is a 100% preventable disease, so the inclusion of the Prevention and Wellness Trust is extremely important to our organization. If we are able to research, develop, and utilize community specific HIV prevention strategies we will be able to make a significant contribution to the lessening of the HIV epidemic in the United States. AIDS Action Council is also delighted that HR 3962 includes a public health insurance plan option. Healthcare reform will only be meaningful if it is affordable for those who are living without health insurance and those who may lose their insurance and will need to have a plan that fits within their household budget.

It is our hope that in conference with the Senate the House will work diligently to include the HIV specific programs, the public option plan, and a robust prevention and wellness trust fund in the final bill for President Obama's signature. We will work with our diverse membership of AIDS Service Organizations, health departments, HIV educators and prevention experts from all across this nation to ensure they are in touch with their Members of Congress to show support for HR 3962. Please call on us if there are additional steps that we can do to support this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

Ronald S. Johnson
Deputy Executive Director

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