

Eshoo Statement on Ryan White Reauthorization

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Washington, D.C. -- Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Palo Alto, issued the following statement in the Congressional Record regarding consideration by the U.S. House of Representatives of H.R. 6143, the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment and Modernization Act of 2006.

"Mr. Speaker, when Congress passed the Ryan White CARE Act in 1990, we sent hope to millions of Americans who were living under a death sentence that came with a diagnosis of HIV or AIDS. In large part because of Ryan White, outcomes have dramatically improved.

"This bill fails to uphold the hopeful tradition of the original legislation because it creates a system of winners and losers in the allocation of federal resources. This major reauthorization of our federal HIV/AIDS policy is also being considered under suspension of the rules, prohibiting Members from offering amendments to address the serious deficiencies in the bill.

"Last week in committee, I offered an amendment with several of my colleagues from the California, New York and New Jersey delegations to increase the overall authorization levels in the bill, which would help address the needs of communities more recently affected by the epidemic. Our amendment also extended the hold harmless provisions of the bill by two years to ensure that the historic epicenters of the disease do not experience precipitous declines in funding levels from year to year. Our amendment was defeated by a single vote.

"Today we can't offer that amendment or any other. Instead, we're left with a 'take it or leave it' proposal that doesn't adequately respond to the real needs of people suffering from HIV and AIDS. Congress has a responsibility to address the imminent crisis facing emerging communities, but we can't abandon the infrastructure of care already in place. By eliminating the hold harmless provision after three years in order to free up funding for emerging communities, some localities will experience sharp funding declines. The bill also doesn't allow sufficient time for states to transit from HIV code-based reporting systems to the more efficient names-based system.

"Although California is making enormous strides to comply, Governor Schwarzenegger reports that the state will likely miss the 2009 deadline, sustaining a loss of up to \$50 million, or 23 percent, of its total funding in FY2011. Such a loss

has the potential to derail the entire state's HIV/AIDS care system.

"Given my serious concerns about the ability of this bill to preserve current infrastructure of care while extending assistance to areas of the country newly affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and with no opportunity to address these concerns with amendments, I reluctantly oppose this bill."

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