March 24, 2015

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Speaker John Boehner
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington D.C. 20515

Minority Leader Harry Reid
U.S. Senate
S-221, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Re: HIV Community Urges “NO” Vote on Budget Proposals

Dear Speaker Boehner, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Reid and Democratic Leader Pelosi:

The 101 undersigned members of the AIDS Budget and Appropriations Coalition (ABAC) and the HIV Health Care Access Working Group (HHCAWG) of the Federal AIDS Policy Partnership (FAPP) strongly urge you to reject the budgets that have been reported out of the House and Senate Budget Committees.

The House and Senate budget proposals fail to maintain the nation’s commitment to people living with HIV and preserve the safety-net programs that people living with HIV rely on for their care, treatment and housing. Cutting funding for critical non-defense discretionary programs and dismantling other programs such as Medicaid, Medicare, and the Affordable Care Act will do irreparable harm to people living with HIV disease, as well as those at risk for HIV infection.

Failure to continue our nation’s investment in a health care safety-net and to support prevention, care and treatment and research programs will result in significant increases in HIV infections; higher hospital and emergency room costs; and diminished hope for a cure and/or vaccine to eventually eradicate HIV disease. We also now know that effective HIV treatment prevents HIV transmission, making comprehensive care for people living with HIV vital to our nation’s public health and to dramatically decreasing new HIV infections in the U.S.
Instead of dismantling these programs, we urge you to:

**Sustain the Federal Commitment to Medicaid and Medicare:** Medicaid is the single largest source of HIV care and treatment. Block-granting Medicaid will shift greater costs to the states, drastically hindering their ability to meet the need for HIV prevention and care services. In addition, proposals that create a voucher program for Medicare would shift costs to people with disabilities and seniors, and will quite simply place lifesaving care and treatment out of reach for people with HIV who rely on this program.

**Support Progress Not Repeal of Health Reform:** Defunding the Affordable Care Act (ACA) will leave millions, including people living with HIV, without access to health care coverage and services. Before the implementation of the ACA, fewer than 20% of people with HIV had access to private insurance coverage. Congress must not abandon the vital reforms that have already increased access to health care coverage for tens of thousands of people with HIV.

**Reject Massive and Arbitrary Cuts to Discretionary Health Care Programs:** Additional cuts to non-defense discretionary programs will be harmful and have significant negative long-term consequences. Our nation’s fiscal health will not be improved by jeopardizing the health of more than a million people living with HIV and AIDS in the United States. Without adequate HIV prevention and care programs, the number of new infections will escalate as will health care costs to treat those newly infected. It is counterproductive to disable the prevention, care and research programs that have controlled the HIV epidemic and transformed HIV disease in the U.S. from a fatal disease to a complex but manageable condition.

**We cannot afford to retreat in our battle against HIV and AIDS and to erode the health care safety-net programs that are vital to millions of the most vulnerable Americans. We strongly urge you to oppose any effort to dismantle the Medicaid and Medicare programs, repeal or defund the reforms included in the Affordable Care Act, or dramatically cut discretionary health spending.**

Should you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact ABAC Co-Chairs Donna Crews at dcrews@aidsunited.org, Emily McCloskey at emccloskey@nastad.org, Carl Schmid at cschmid@theaidsinstitute.org or HHCAWG co-chairs Robert Greenwald at rgreenwa@law.harvard.edu, Amy Killelea at akillelea@nastad.org, Andrea Weddle at aweddle@idsociety.org.

Sincerely,

**ActionAIDS**
**ADAP Educational Initiative**
**Affirmations Lesbian Gay Community Center**

**AIDS Action Baltimore**
**AIDS Action Coalition**
**AIDS Action Committee of MA**
**AIDS Alabama**
National Latino AIDS Action Network (NLAAN)
National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC)
The National Working Positive Coalition
North Carolina AIDS Action Network
North Central Texas HIV Planning Council (Fort Worth)
Pediatric AIDS Chicago Prevention Initiative
The Philadelphia Center
Positive Women's Network - USA
Prevention On The Move/ Steward Marchman Act Behavioral Healthcare Project Inform
Ryan White Medical Providers Coalition
San Francisco AIDS Foundation
Seattle TGA HIV Planning Council

Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)
South Carolina Campaign to End AIDS
Southern HIV/AIDS Strategy Initiative
START at Westminster
TOUCH-Together Our Unity Can Heal, Inc.
Treatment Access Expansion Project
Treatment Action Group
Tulsa CARES
Urban Coalition for HIV/AIDS Prevention Services (UCHAPS)
VillageCare
Washington Heights CORNER Project
The Women's Collective
Women at Work International
Women With a Vision, Inc.

cc: All Members of Congress