

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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**BUSH BUDGET FAILS TO PROVIDE
SUFFICIENT FUNDING FOR AIDS TREATMENT PROGRAM**

WASHINGTON – Leading congressional Democrats today called on the Bush Administration to adequately fund a program that helps uninsured AIDS patients afford life saving medications. Under an ambitious new initiative, “Advancing HIV Prevention,” CDC is promoting HIV testing with the goal of diagnosing the majority of Americans who are currently unaware that they are infected with HIV. However, the Bush Administration budget fails to provide sufficient funding to the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) in order to treat these newly diagnosed patients.

ADAP is an important, but chronically underfunded safety net for uninsured Americans with AIDS. According to the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors, ADAP already faces an estimated \$180.5 billion shortfall that prevents it from providing services to all of those who qualify and from raising the standard of services to include all effective treatments. A conservative estimate is that \$45.3 million more will be needed in 2005 to meet the demand from patients newly diagnosed through the CDC program. The Administration’s 2005 budget does not come close to meeting the need — providing less than 1/6th of the increase needed to ensure that all HIV-positive Americans have access to essential therapies.

In a letter to Secretary Thompson, the members write: “By failing to provide necessary funds for HIV/AIDS care, the Administration is risking the success of the CDC’s HIV testing initiative. Patients and providers may be less likely to test if lifesaving medications cannot be obtained.” The members continue, “we urge you to reverse this retreat from critical, life-saving HIV care.”

The letter was signed by House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer, Rep. Henry A. Waxman, Ranking Member of the Government Reform Committee, Rep. Barney Frank, Rep. Sherrod Brown, Ranking Member of the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health, Rep. Donna M. Christensen, Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust, Rep. Barbara Lee, Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus Task Force on Global HIV/AIDS, and Rep. Tammy Baldwin.

The complete letter can be found at www.house.gov/reform/min.