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October 28, 2015

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of AIDS United and its 39 Public Policy Committee Organizational Members, including many of the largest AIDS Service Organizations (ASOs), I write to support passage of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015. This compromise, brokered by all four corners of congressional leadership and the President, is a step toward a return to “regular order” in the appropriations process. Regular order, coupled with almost full replacement of sequestration’s harmful cuts, will allow for Congress to complete work on fiscal year (FY) 2016 appropriations bills and reinvest in public health and health research, as well as other domestic programs that keep Americans healthy, safe, and secure.

While this measure is not a perfect solution, AIDS United views this balanced approach agreed to in Bipartisan Budget Act as a positive step forward. This proposal builds on the 2013 budget agreement for 2014 and 2015— providing more substantial relief from sequestration. The measure greatly reduces the sequestration budget cuts current law mandates for non-defense discretionary programs in fiscal years 2016 and 2017, while also providing equal sequester relief for defense in both years.

This relief is critical as domestic HIV/AIDS programs across the country have been subjected to devastating cuts due to sequestration. ASOs nationwide have felt the cuts in their programs as the number of people living with HIV continues to grow. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate 50,000 new infections per year and the treatment regimens have allowed those living with HIV to live longer and more productive lives. However, HIV deaths have continued at a rate of nearly 15,000 per year according to the CDC.

AIDS United urges House and Senate Members to pass the Bipartisan Budget Act. Once passed, Congress should work to develop spending legislation that does not include ideologically driven health riders that could threaten the implementation of this historic deal. Therefore, as you prepare to develop FY 2016 appropriations bills, AIDS United respectfully requests that you:

- Restore funding to several critical HIV/AIDS programs, including cuts to the Minority HIV/AIDS Initiative (MAI) and the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Special Projects of National Significance (SPNS),
- Modernize the Housing Opportunities for Persons Living With AIDS(HOPWA) formula and increase funding for the HOPWA program to minimize funding losses to jurisdictions,
- Include language to end the ban on the use of federal funds for syringe exchange programs and to maintain language that allows the use of local funds for syringe exchange programs in the District of Columbia.
- Increase funding for domestic HIV programs.

If you have any questions, please contact AIDS United’s Director of Government Affairs, Carl Baloney at [cbaloney@aidsunited.org](mailto:cbaloney@aidsunited.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronald Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ronald Johnson  
Vice President Policy and Advocacy