

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2101

July 20, 2012

Via Electronic Transmission

Mary K. Wakefield, PhD, RN
Administrator
Health Resources and Services Administration
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Dr. Wakefield,

We are at a critical juncture in the fight against HIV/AIDS both in the United States and internationally. Recent research has provided exciting evidence that can be leveraged to make strides against HIV/AIDS and improve care and treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS. The Ryan White HIV/AIDS program is vital to ensuring that patients living with HIV/AIDS in the United States receive the treatment and care services they need. Now more than ever, we must be good stewards of taxpayer dollars and ensure funds are being used efficiently, effectively, and properly on behalf of patients who are in the greatest need of assistance.

Last week we released a new report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) examining the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA's) oversight of the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency Act of 1990.¹ We are concerned with inconsistencies in HRSA's application of regulations and guidance in its oversight of the Ryan White HIV/AIDS program, as well as the lack of a risk-based strategy within the agency to strategically prioritize site visits to grantees, which were identified by GAO. Inconsistent guidance and vague procedures jeopardize the ability of grantees to assure HRSA and the Congress that taxpayer dollars are used to provide quality care for HIV/AIDS patients and their families. Furthermore, inadequate oversight through site visits and other tools may mean that federal resources are not being properly utilized, which is vital in our current fiscal situation. We know that you share our commitment to providing access to treatment and care for patients and an understanding that the Ryan White HIV/AIDS program is too important to allow such problems to persist.

The issues identified by the report must be addressed without delay in a transparent and accountable manner. In the report, GAO makes several recommendations HRSA can implement in this regard and we understand that HRSA is taking steps to improve its current processes and policies. As such, we respectfully request that HRSA submit to our offices a strategic management plan including an implementation timeline and specific details identifying the steps

¹ GAO report 12-610.

HRSA will take to address the problems identified in the report and how the agency plans to address GAO's recommendations.

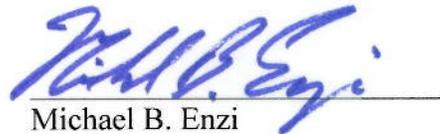
We appreciate your attention to this important issue and remain committed to ensuring that the Ryan White HIV/AIDS program effectively serves people living with HIV/AIDS. We respectfully request that you provide this management plan to us by August 22nd.

Thank you for your continued work to ensure people living with HIV/AIDS receive the care and treatment they need. We look forward to working with you to strengthen and improve the Ryan White HIV/AIDS program and at such a critical time in the history of the HIV/AIDS response. If you have any questions about this request, please contact Andi Fristedt with Senator Harkin, Melissa Pfaff with Senator Enzi, Anna Abram with Senator Burr, or Gabe Sudduth with Senator Coburn.

Sincerely,



Tom Harkin
U.S. Senator



Michael B. Enzi
U.S. Senator



Richard Burr
U.S. Senator



Tom Coburn, M.D.
U.S. Senator