

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
May 17, 2006

**CONTACT:** Laura Capps/Melissa Wagoner  
(202) 224-2633

**STATEMENT BY SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY ON RYAN WHITE  
MODERNIZATION ACT**

*(AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY)*

Today's markup focuses in part on one of the greatest public health investments we have made in this country -- the care and treatment of individuals with HIV/AIDS.

Almost sixteen years ago, the members of this Committee demonstrated their commitment to the care and treatment of Americans living with AIDS by passing the Ryan White Care Act. It has been a model of bipartisan cooperation and Federal leadership, and I am proud that this reauthorization process has continued that bipartisan commitment.

Sixteen years ago, Americans were struggling with the devastating effects of the virus. By 1995, more than a million citizens were infected with the AIDS virus, and AIDS itself had become the leading killer of young Americans aged 25 to 44. AIDS was killing brothers and sisters, children and parents, friends and loved ones -- all in the prime of their lives.

Since that time, community-based care has become more available, drug treatments have nearly doubled the life expectancy of HIV-positive individuals, and public campaigns have increased awareness of the disease.

While we still seek a cure to AIDS, the Ryan White funds have allowed us to help those infected by the virus to lead long and productive lives, through the miracles of good care, treatment, and the availability of prescription drugs.

This is evident in my state of Massachusetts. By the end of 2004, a little more than 26,000 residents had been diagnosed and reported with HIV/AIDS. Of that number, 42% have died --- but 58% are living. That was not the case 10 years ago.

We in America know of the pain and loss that this disease cruelly inflicts. Millions of our fellow citizens -- men, women, and children -- are infected with HIV/AIDS. And far too many have lost their lives. 63% of African-Americans, for example, say they personally know someone who is living with HIV or has died of AIDS.

As the challenge of HIV/AIDS continues, year after year, it has become more difficult for anyone to claim that AIDS is someone else's problem. The epidemic has cost the nation immeasurable talent and energy in young and promising lives struck down long before their time. We must do a better job to identify, treat, and support those caught in the epidemic's path.

This markup today is the first step in reaffirming both the structure of the CARE Act -- which continues to provide a sound and solid backbone for HIV/AIDS care across the nation.

As we increase our efforts to provide better care, treatment, and drugs in rural areas that have seen an increase in the AIDS epidemic, we must ensure that more state flexibility does not cause the collapse of existing structures of care under Ryan White. In order to achieve the balance, we must continue to resolve the issues of funding that are so important to the success of this legislation.

The Ryan White CARE Act is about more than just funds and health care services. It's about caring

and the American tradition of reaching out to people who are suffering and in need of help. I am grateful to Senator Enzi and his staff, Congressman Barton and his staff, Congressman Dingell and his staff, and the Administration for the successful bipartisan, bicameral process that brought us to this day. The Ryan White CARE Act has made a life-changing impact for so many over the last 16 years. I am hopeful this process results in a fair and balanced piece of legislation worthy of its purpose.

###