



For Immediate Release

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**HELP Committee Passes Life-Saving HIV/AIDS Act
*Enzi: Bipartisan Bill Ensures Funds Go to Areas with Greatest Need***

Washington, D.C. – The bipartisan Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Extension Act of 2009, approved unanimously today by the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, will save lives by ensuring that people with HIV/AIDS across the country can get the treatment they need, Senator Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.) announced.

“Millions of Americans living with HIV/AIDS rely on the Ryan White program to get the treatment they need. Passing this bill to renew and improve Ryan White will ensure that we can continue to provide access to life-saving treatment and care across the country,” said Enzi, Ranking Member of the HELP Committee.

“This bill ensures that federal funds will be spent effectively and will be distributed to areas that need help the most. We are determined to fight the epidemic of today, not yesterday, which means redirecting funds to areas of the country with rising numbers of people living with HIV/AIDS. We have to make sure that the money follows the patients.”

The bill approved today by the HELP Committee updates funding formulas and requires accurate and reliable data reporting, ensuring that funds are allocated fairly to areas of the country with rising HIV/AIDS populations. The bill provides more flexibility to allow grantees to spend funds effectively. It encourages aggressive testing strategies and establishes a national HIV/AIDS testing goal of 5 million tests per year.

“I hope that this bill will move quickly through the full Senate and the House to ensure that there is no disruption in the Ryan White Program,” added Enzi.

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Statement of Senator Michael B. Enzi

Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

Executive Session to consider the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Extension Act of 2009

September 30, 2009

Good Morning. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this important hearing. Before I begin my statement, I would like to congratulate and thank you for taking on the responsibilities of the Chairmanship of our Committee. It won't be an easy task. Because of the issues we deal with every day, it is tremendously important that we have a Chairman who is determined to follow in the footsteps of Senator Kennedy and continue the bipartisan

tradition that we have all been a part of for so many years, a tradition with which you are very familiar. It's altogether fitting and appropriate that we take up this legislation today because it reflects the spirit of progress and a willingness to work across the aisles toward a shared and common goal that has been a hallmark of our work in this Committee. I am looking forward to working with you as Chairman and again, congratulations on your willingness to take on the reins of leadership of this Committee.

Today we are considering the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Extension Act of 2009. The bill before us will extend the Ryan White reauthorization that was passed by the Committee with overwhelming support just a few years ago. The last reauthorization established a new framework to ensure that Ryan White funds are distributed to the areas that need it the most. It exemplifies a simple principle that I have fought for during my service as both Chairman and Ranking Member of the HELP Committee: the money should follow the patient.

This bill continues to promote that policy goal through the policies of the bill that include: the phasing out of hold harmless funds, requiring grantees to report accurate and reliable data, and slowly phasing out grantees who no longer meet the eligibility requirement so that funding can be redirected to areas that are increasingly seeing a rise in the number of individuals with HIV and AIDS.

It provides grantees more flexibility to ensure that funds are spent effectively, but are not subject to onerous penalties. It also incorporates important prevention policies that reward grantees finding undiagnosed individuals and initiating aggressive testing activities and strategies. In addition, it includes a national HIV/AIDS testing goal of 5 million tests per year. Providing 5 million tests will allow us to find half of the undiagnosed individuals in the country in 5 years. This is an important part of the reauthorization because - as we continue to aid testing programs abroad and encourage nations to aggressively promote prevention and testing - we need to ensure that the U.S. sets an example by also adopting an aggressive testing strategy. If PEPFAR has a testing goal, then why shouldn't we have one for the United States? It has been proven that individuals receiving early treatment are able to reduce the risk of transmission. In addition, if people are aware of their status they are more likely to make better lifestyle choices and that will help to reduce the spread of the disease.

We have come a long way since the inception of the Ryan White program. When it was first passed into law on August 18, 1990 it was primarily focused on treatment, but it also provided hospice care and palliative care. It was only 30 years ago that HIV/AIDS was a death sentence. Today people are able to continue to live fulfilling and rewarding lives. With the passage of the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Extension Act of 2009 we will not only expand our ability to prevent the disease, but we will continue to provide access to the necessary treatment and care that individuals need to continue to live a long and productive life.

I want to thank Chairman Harkin, Senator Dodd and Senator Coburn for their hard work on this bill and their determination that we will not allow politics to delay the progress that this important program has made in the effort to provide the necessary care and treatment to individuals every day. I also want to thank my colleagues on the Committee for their support and for their patience during this process.

In addition to Ryan White, I understand that today we have three nominees who have gone through the Committee vetting process. They are Brenda Dann-Messier, Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education at the Department of Education; Alexa Posny, Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services at Education; and

George Cohen; Director for the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services. I recommend that these nominees move forward so they can receive floor consideration, and I am comfortable with a voice vote for each. This brings the total number of nominees confirmed by the Committee to 32 since January.

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