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President Lauded for Medicare Proposal

An important first step toward making the program work for people living with HIV

Washington, DC--The National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA) applauds the proposal put forth by the President yesterday to reform Medicare, add a prescription drug benefit, and protect the program's long-term financial health.

"Clearly, when pharmaceuticals for people living with HIV cost between \$12,000-\$15,000 annually, the proposed drug benefit will not meet the needs of all people living with HIV in Medicare. Nonetheless, this new benefit would provide modest relief for some -- and it establishes the principle that drugs are an essential component of modern health care," said Jeffrey S. Crowley, M.P.H., Deputy Executive Director for Programs at NAPWA and Co-Chair of the Health Task Force of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD).

NAPWA joined the CCD in urging the Clinton Administration to take the next step and develop a plan to provide catastrophic coverage for persons for whom life-saving pharmaceutical expenses are unusually large.

NAPWA also acknowledged the President's continued leadership on health care issues.

"Like the Energizer bunny, the President keeps going and going -- continuing to keep America's complex and pressing health care issues on the nation's agenda. Just because the issues of access, affordability, and quality health care are difficult, does not mean that we can fail to address them," stated A. Cornelius Baker, Executive Director at NAPWA.

HIV and Medicare

Based on 1997, the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA, the federal agency that administers Medicare) estimates that \$1.4 billion dollars were spent providing health care to people living with AIDS through the Medicare program. This estimate makes Medicare the second largest source of HIV care in the United States after Medicaid.

HCFA also estimates that between 10,565 - 22,927 people with AIDS are beneficiaries of the Medicare program.

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The National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA) serves as a national voice for all people living with HIV and AIDS. We advocate on behalf of the nearly one million people in the United States living with HIV in order to end the pandemic and the human suffering caused by HIV and AIDS.



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