

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 18, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C., 20515

The Honorable John Boehner  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-204, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C., 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader Boehner:

In recent years, the United States has demonstrated historic leadership in the global fight against HIV/AIDS. We believe it is now time to take a fresh look at the epidemic here at home, bolster efforts to reduce HIV infections, and allow states to design programs with proven results. As supporters of effective and evidence-based HIV prevention, we are writing to urge you to remove the restriction on use of federal funds for syringe exchange programs (SEPs) in the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act.

After twenty years of experience with syringe exchange in the United States, with nearly 200 programs in operation across the country, it has been repeatedly demonstrated that SEPs counteract HIV epidemics among people who inject drugs and their sexual partners. Studies demonstrate that SEPs reduce HIV risk without increasing drug use. Syringe exchange programs have successfully prevented, contained, and reversed drug-related HIV epidemics in communities across the country, and provide a growing range of critical health care services, education, and support to vulnerable groups. Moreover, syringe exchange programs have helped countless substance users enter addiction treatment, and these programs serve as a crucial link to successful treatment and recovery programs through counseling and case management.

Syringe exchange has been extensively researched and endorsed by many leading experts and professional associations including the American Medical Association, the Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR), the Infectious Diseases Society of America, the American Psychological Association, the American Academy of Family Medicine, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Preventive Medicine, the American Nurses Association, the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care, the American Academy of Physician Assistants, and the HIV Medical Association.

The ban on federal funding for syringe exchange has limited the ability of local and state jurisdictions to respond effectively to the HIV epidemic. In 2005 alone, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that a total of 14,760 people who received an AIDS diagnosis or reported an HIV infection had a risk factor relating to intravenous drug use. Since the CDC began counting cases, that number amounts to more than 383,000 people. African Americans

account for over 50 percent of all AIDS cases attributed to injection drug use, while Latinos account for nearly 25 percent. Among women, an estimated 61 percent of AIDS cases are related to injection drug use.

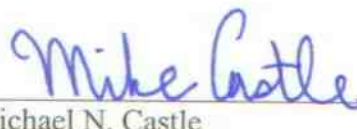
For example, New York City has seen a 75 percent decrease in the prevalence of HIV among people who inject drugs since implementing syringe exchange programs in 1992. However, federal funding restrictions limit syringe exchange coverage in New York and elsewhere to only a fraction of people in need of these prevention services.

Therefore, we urge the House leadership to review the evidence and to seek immediate removal of the ban on federal funding of syringe exchange. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,




Elijah E. Cummings  
Member of Congress



Michael N. Castle  
Member of Congress



Tammy Baldwin  
Member of Congress



Robert A. Brady  
Member of Congress



Howard L. Berman  
Member of Congress



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Yvette Clarke  
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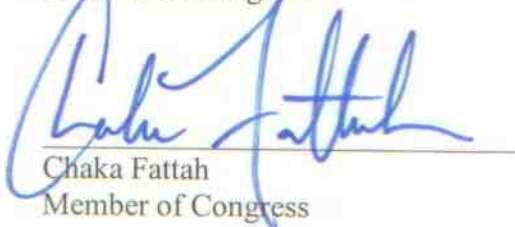
  
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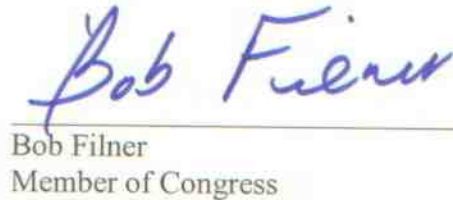
  
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Vernon J. Ehlers  
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Keith Ellison  
Member of Congress

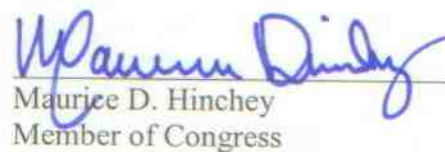
  
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Sam Farr  
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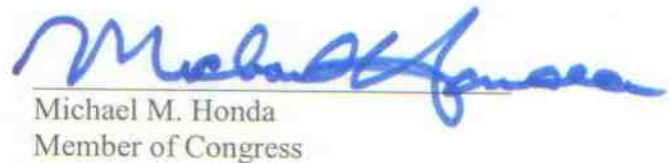
  
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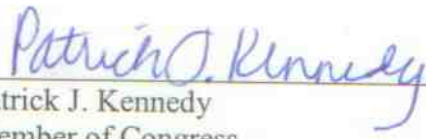
  
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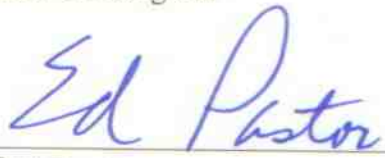
  
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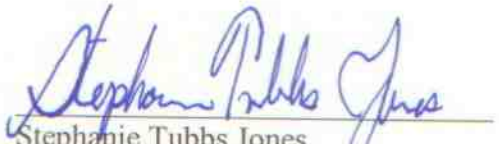
  
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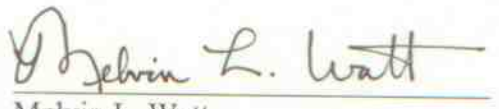
  
Ellen O. Tauscher  
Member of Congress

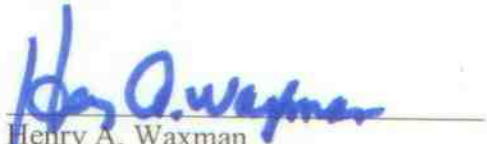
  
Mike Thompson  
Member of Congress

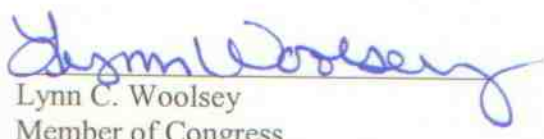
  
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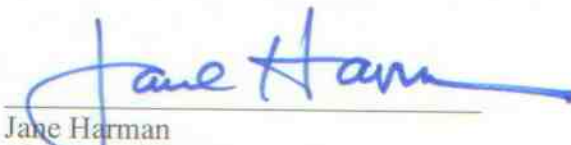
  
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Nydia M. Velázquez  
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Melvin L. Watt  
Member of Congress

  
Henry A. Waxman  
Member of Congress

  
Lynn C. Woolsey  
Member of Congress

  
Jane Harman  
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable David R. Obey, Chairman, Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Jerry Lewis, Ranking Member, Appropriations Committee