

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 16, 2007

Secretary Michael O. Leavitt
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Leavitt:

We write to express our serious concern regarding the availability of federally funded services for the treatment of persons living with HIV/AIDS in Puerto Rico. We urge the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to work closely with the Puerto Rican government and local agencies to ensure that patients receive medically necessary care and services.

On Friday, February 9, 2007, Congressional Hispanic Caucus staff was briefed by directors of community-based organizations, national HIV/AIDS advocacy groups, and Puerto Rico based persons living with HIV/AIDS. These individuals, many of whom work in the field to assist patients with HIV/AIDS, identified deficiencies in the administration of Ryan White Title I and II, ADAP and HOPWA funds that prevent local medical centers from providing vital care to those in need. We were informed these deficiencies in Title I and Title II programs are different in nature and should be addressed accordingly.

According to the accounts given on February 9th, the San Juan EMA and the Puerto Rico Department of Health have not properly managed the service infrastructure that provides medical and supportive assistance to local health centers. As a result, hundreds of Puerto Ricans living with HIV/AIDS may not be receiving vital care and services.

We are very concerned with the situation in Puerto Rico as presented by the HIV/AIDS advocacy groups, and we request HHS to update us on the current state of affairs in Puerto Rico regarding the administration and distribution of federal funding, particularly with respect to the San Juan EMA and the Puerto Rico Department of Health.

We are confident that HHS will continue to work closely with Puerto Rico's Ryan White grantees, community-based organizations, and HIV/AIDS patients to ensure that patients receive the care that Congress intended. We see this situation as requiring prompt and decisive action; the lives of patients in Puerto Rico depend upon it.

Given the urgency of the situation presented, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus will closely monitor the situation as it continues to develop. We thank you, in advance, for your prompt attention and response to this request.

Sincerely,


JOE BACA
Chair, Congressional Hispanic Caucus


HILDA L. SOLIS
Chair, CHC Health Task Force































