

IDSA: 2009 Bush budget a disaster for HIV/AIDS

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The President's proposed budget for fiscal year 2009, if enacted, would spell disaster for the nation's health, and by extension, our national effort to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States.

The Administration's budget flat-funds critical federal support for research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), public health programs at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and vital health care safety net programs funded through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and the Medicaid program. After accounting for inflation, the budget proposal amounts to a cut in funding for HIV/AIDS research, prevention, care, and treatment.

Adding insult to injury, the budget proposal increases funding for abstinence education programs that have no basis in scientific evidence, an irresponsible policy with potentially deadly consequences. Failure to adequately support evidence-based prevention programs diminishes our capacity to monitor the epidemic, to expand HIV screening to identify those who are already infected but unaware of their status, and to prevent new infections through targeted programs directed to high-risk populations.

Cutting federal Medicaid funding during the current economic downturn when states are struggling to maintain their programs will only result in reductions in eligibility and vital medical services for this essential health care safety net program that provides more financing for HIV care than any other source. The impact of these proposed cuts will

undoubtedly fall on the most vulnerable among us—the poor, the elderly, the chronically ill, and those living with disabilities.

"We call on the Congress to reject this budget blueprint and to enact a 2009 budget that values and adequately funds medical research, and public health programs including HIV prevention, while preserving and enhancing the health care safety net for persons living with HIV infection through the Ryan White CARE Act and the Medicaid program."

Source: Infectious Diseases Society of America

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