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**For Immediate Release**

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**PRESIDENT'S BUDGET FLAT FUNDS SERVICES FOR WOMEN WITH HIV**

HIV-positive women outraged at lack of funding for women & families

Women living with HIV throughout the U.S. were disappointed at some details of the President's FY 2010 budget, released late last week. The overall budget calls for a modest increase in funding to fight the growing domestic HIV epidemic, but flat-funds the Ryan White Part D program, the only federal funding stream designated to serve women, children and families living with HIV. The HIV epidemic among women has worsened over the past two and a half decades, with the Centers for Disease control estimating over 300,000 women to be living with HIV in the United States.

"We commend the Administration's focus on HIV prevention based on sound science -- but given recent information by the Kaiser Family Foundation that general public awareness of HIV has decreased over the last few years, underinvestment in HIV programs is impractical and sends a dangerous signal to the public," commented Naina Khanna, Coordinator of the U.S. Positive Women's Network, a national membership body of women living with HIV. "And even in these hard economic times, a mere 5% of Americans believe the U.S. is spending too much on domestic HIV/AIDS. There is broad public support for preventing new infections and keeping people in care."

Ryan White Part D provides funding for services designated to women, children and families affected by HIV/AIDS. Data consistently shows that women are less likely than men to stay in care once diagnosed. Approximately 76% of women living with HIV have at least one child under 18 in their homes, and services for women must reflect that reality in order to keep women in consistent care, say advocates.

"Without the services provided by Part D funding, I don't know if I would have been able to overcome the depression, loneliness, fear and stigma of my HIV diagnosis," says Linda Scruggs,

an HIV-positive woman living outside the District of Columbia, where one in ten African American women are estimated to be living with HIV. Loren Jones, a Ryan White Part D services recipient and co-chair of the Community Input Task Force in Oakland, CA adds: "These are the only services entirely dedicated to HIV-positive women and men with dependent children. It is a major part of our attempt to provide services including whole family emotional support, legal assistance, and education to those members of the community that are not often highlighted as being impacted by HIV disease."

Organizations receiving Part D funding have been funded at the same level for the past five years, though the number of women they are serving has continued to grow. Women's organizations are fearful of the repercussions this cut will have on services to women. "Level funding is essentially a cut in funding - and is just another sign that women's needs are not being taken seriously," says Maura Riordan, Executive Director of Women Organized to Respond to Life-threatening Disease (WORLD) in Oakland, CA.

Liz Brosnan, Executive Director of Christie's Place in San Diego adds: "I am shocked to see that the vast majority of the Ryan White program is slated for increases, while Part D, serving women and children, will not receive any additional funding -- though the need to serve women continues to grow exponentially. These are successful programs that provide clinical and support services for women and youth. We should fund what's working."

The Positive Women's Network calls on members of Congress to increase FY 2010 appropriations for Part D of the Ryan White program. "We will be in Washington, DC next week to discuss this with our legislators," says Pat Kelly, an HIV-positive woman from Orangeburg, South Carolina. Statistics show the epidemic is over 50 percent female in some counties in the Deep South. "We urge HIV-positive women, families and those who work with them to join us in demanding funding levels that correspond to the needs of the epidemic."

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The U.S. Positive Women's Network is a project of WORLD (Women Organized to Respond to Life-threatening Disease) in Oakland, CA. We are a national membership body of women with HIV and allies throughout the United States. For more information and to join the PWN please visit: [www.womenhiv.org/positivewomen](http://www.womenhiv.org/positivewomen)