



A Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty



Take Action!

June 18, 2008

SENATE: Save Lives and Move the AIDS Bill Forward Now!

TAKE ACTION NOW! Contact your Senators now (<http://actioncenter.crs.org>) and urge them to reach a bipartisan consensus to reauthorize the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

WHY IS PROGRESS ON THE PEPFAR BILL STALLED? The Senate Foreign Relations Committee passed the bill to reauthorize PEPFAR, known as S. 2731, *Tom Lantos and Henry J. Hyde United States Global Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Reauthorization Act*, in March. Since then, the bill has been stalled in the Senate with no vote scheduled. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) are signatories to a recent [ad in Roll Call](#) urging "Senators to negotiate an immediate end to the disagreements currently preventing the Senate from bringing its bill to the floor."

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE PEPFAR BILL DOESN'T MOVE FORWARD?

Catholic health institutions deliver approximately 25 percent of all HIV and AIDS care worldwide. Much of this care requires advanced planning while many care providers depend on U.S. government funding to carry out their programs. Without a firm commitment to reauthorize the PEPFAR program, care providers cannot plan for future activities. The risk of suspension in assured funding, however brief, could disrupt HIV treatment, undermine the credibility of healthcare institutions providing HIV services, and endanger lives.

WHY IS PEPFAR IMPORTANT?

Because of PEPFAR, CRS has saved more than 115,000 lives through antiretroviral treatment and provides HIV care and support services for another 175,000 HIV positive people. Men and women who were on the brink of death are now leading normal lives, caring for their children and contributing to their communities because they are on antiretroviral therapy. More than 60,000 orphaned children are being cared for, going to school and embracing a bright future. Nearly 350,000 youth have been educated about risky behaviors and how abstinence-until-marriage and mutual fidelity within marriage are the most effective ways to prevent HIV infections. Visit the CRS website (http://crs.org/public-policy/hiv_aids.cfm) for more information about PEPFAR.



Grace Mutopa from Zambia is HIV positive. Thanks to PEPFAR, Grace is taking antiretroviral medications that have given her back her strength. She now works a small garden plot and is able to provide for her 7-year old son with the proceeds from the vegetables she sells. Photo: David Snyder for CRS.

WHAT DOES PEPFAR HAVE TO DO WITH MY FAITH?

Our faith tradition as Catholics requires us to care for "the least of these" and to uphold the life and dignity of all people. People affected by HIV or suffering from AIDS need and deserve our love and care, just as Jesus called on us to care for those who are hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill. Catholic social teaching instructs us to live in solidarity with our brothers and sisters around the world. Pope Benedict XVI, in his World AIDS Day message in 2007 stated: "I wish to exhort all people of good will to increase their efforts to halt the spread of the HIV virus, to combat the disdain which is often directed towards people who are affected by it, and to care for the sick, especially those who are still children."

WHAT IS THE CHURCH'S POSITION ON PEPFAR?

The Catholic Church in the United States strongly supports moving forward with a PEPFAR bill that retains the program's current focus on saving the lives of poor people affected by HIV and living with AIDS. Bishop Wenski, Bishop of Orlando and Chairman of the USCCB's International Justice and Peace Committee, reiterated the Church's support for the PEPFAR program, stating: "Not only has PEPFAR saved lives, the world has seen in PEPFAR a true act of American compassion and leadership. This U.S. global initiative has also raised the bar for other donor countries to respond with generosity to the AIDS pandemic." [Read Bishop Wenski's opinion editorial in the Orlando Sentinel here.](#)

For more information, contact:

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