HIV Health Care Access Working Group

July 19, 2011

U.S. Senate
Washington, DC

Dear Senator:

We are writing on behalf of the HIV Health Care Access Working Group (HHCAWG) to urge you to protect our country's most vulnerable residents in the deficit reduction process by **not reducing the federal commitment to the Medicaid program through block grants or other financing mechanisms that lower the federal share of costs, such as a new blended matching rate**.

We are at a pivotal moment in the HIV epidemic. The science is clear. Treatment is available that offers people with HIV/AIDS the opportunity to live healthy, productive and long lives. New evidence also makes it clear that the benefits of treatment extend beyond the individual to the community and public health as effective treatment reduces the risk of HIV transmission by 96%.

**Now is the time to stand by effective and cost-saving health care safety-net programs, such as the Medicaid program.** We strongly urge you to reject measures that may save federal dollars in the short-term but will cost more over the long-term – whether measured in federal health care expenditures, health outcomes or lives lost. We also strongly urge you to oppose any measures that may compromise the Medicaid coverage expansion under health care reform. More than a million people living with, or affected by, HIV/AIDS in the U.S. are counting on you to defend this program.

Please contact the HHCAWG co-chairs (Robert Greenwald, Treatment Access Expansion Project at rgreenwa@law.harvard.edu) and Andrea Weddle, HIV Medicine Association at aweddle@hivma.org) regarding this issue.

Respectfully Submitted by the Steering Committee of the HIV Health Care Access Working Group,