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2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

MAJORITY (202) 225-2927
FACSIMILE (202) 225-2525
MINORITY (202) 225-3641

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Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman Chairman, Committee on Energy and Commerce

H.R. 3792, the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Extension Act of 2009 Markup October 14, 2009

Chairman Pallone, Ranking Member Deal, Ranking Member Barton and I have worked in a bipartisan and bicameral fashion to present the bill before you today, and we hope to see it become law soon.

The Ryan White Program has been serving people living with HIV and AIDS for nearly two decades. Today, the program provides care, treatment and support services to nearly half a million people—most of who are low income. Without this critical safety net, some of our nation's most vulnerable populations would not receive the care and treatment they need and rightfully deserve.

Last month, during our legislative hearing, we had the opportunity to hear from the Administration and various witnesses who testified on the importance of the Ryan White Program.

Different concerns arose on each side of the aisle. But one unifying commitment was there from the start: The Ryan White Program must not end. We all agree that the HIV/AIDS epidemic is not a partisan issue; it is a human issue. As such, we came together quickly to find common ground to ensure that the program could continue uninterrupted.

To reach consensus, we all had to compromise. Because this bill reflects that approach, it doesn't contain all of the provisions I would have liked to see. Nonetheless, I believe we have arrived at good, solid positions that will result in a better, stronger Ryan White Program for the next four years.

The bill was informed by technical assistance from the Administration, as well as a community consensus document endorsed by nearly 300 organizations in 47 states.

We also received recommendations from the Congressional Black, Hispanic, and Asian Pacific American Caucuses. The HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to have a hugely

disproportionate impact on racial and ethnic minority populations. Input from the TriCaucus was not only important, it was vital.

I would like to thank Chairman Pallone, and Ranking Members Deal and Barton for their leadership on this important piece of legislation. I strongly urge an “aye” vote on H.R. 3792 today.