

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 3, 2003

Dear Colleague:

We are writing to encourage you to join us in sponsoring the Early Treatment for HIV Act (ETHA), which gives states the **option** to extend Medicaid coverage earlier in the course of their disease to low-income individuals living with HIV. ETHA addresses a "catch-22" in the current system – that often people must become disabled by AIDS before they can access the Medicaid-provided care that could have prevented them from becoming so ill in the first place.

States should be entitled to exercise such an option as a strategy to address the HIV/AIDS crisis. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that approximately 800,000 people are living with HIV in the U.S., with 40,000 new HIV infections occurring each year. New treatments have improved both the health and quality of life for thousands. However, many uninsured, poor, and low-income Americans still do not have access to these life-saving medications because HIV-positive individuals are generally not eligible for Medicaid until they are disabled by full blown AIDS.

ETHA is modeled after the successful Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment and Prevention Act of 2000, which allows states to provide early intervention access to Medicaid to women with breast and cervical cancer. Even in these difficult fiscal times, forty-five states have implemented this initiative designed to preserve health and prevent unnecessary and high cost medical interventions. We should be proud that we have given states an opportunity to provide cost-effective and life-saving health care to women with cancer, and by passing ETHA we can build upon this success.

Our commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS has had tremendous results here in the United States. Supporting states in their efforts to ensure access to medical care will give people living with HIV the opportunity to stay healthy and productive.

Please join us as a cosponsor of the Early Treatment for HIV Act, giving states the option to extend early intervention Medicaid coverage to people living with HIV. If you would like to sign on as an original cosponsor of this legislation, please contact Jake Ewart in Senator Smith's office at 224-1680, or Christina Ho in Senator Clinton's office at 224-9023.

Sincerely,



Gordon H. Smith
United States Senate



Hillary Rodham Clinton
United States Senate