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Latino AIDS Awareness Day Marked With Support for the Ryan White CARE Act

***AIDS Organizations Thankful to Congressional Hispanic Caucus for
Voices of Support for HIV/AIDS Care and Treatment***

Washington, DC – October 6, 2005 – The National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC), AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth & Families (AIDS Alliance) and the Communities Advocating Emergency AIDS Relief (CAEAR) Coalition thanks the members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) who honored the upcoming Latino AIDS Awareness Day by speaking on the House floor, urgently calling on Congress to reauthorize the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency (CARE) Act. The CARE Act, which expired Friday, September 30, provides desperately needed care, treatment and support services to over 577,000 people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS nationwide.

The domestic HIV/AIDS epidemic has had a dramatic impact on communities of color since its beginning. Although racial and ethnic minorities comprise only a small percentage of the total population, they account for a disproportionate number of people living with HIV/AIDS. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 20 percent of people living with HIV/AIDS in the United States are Latinos, and Latinos represent 20 percent of those served by the CARE Act.

Representatives Hilda Solis (D-CA) – Chairwoman of the CHC Health Task Force – Representative Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) and other CHC members participated in the special order speeches delivered on the House floor earlier this evening. The Members were united in their call for additional funding, expanded supportive services, and increased capacity-building resources for communities of color to respond appropriately and swiftly to the epidemic.

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President Bush called on Congress to reauthorize the CARE Act during his State of the Union address earlier this year, with special emphasis on the needs of people of color who are living with HIV/AIDS. Increased attention towards the needs of Latinos is very much needed. Over the last three years, the number of new HIV/AIDS diagnoses among Latinos increased more than 14 percent. Latinas represent 18 percent of new HIV infections among women, and Latino men represent 20 percent of new infections among men. HIV-positive Latinos are more likely than their white counterparts to postpone getting treatment for reasons such as a lack of transportation. They are also more likely to delay care after HIV diagnosis.

Robert Cordero, Co-chair of CAEAR Coalition's Public Policy Committee, stated, "Unfortunately, Latinos remain a significant part of the hidden AIDS epidemic in America due to poverty and stigma, as well as cultural and linguistic barriers. The CARE Act provides life saving services to Latinos living with HIV that would otherwise not be available. The reauthorized bill should enhance system-wide efforts to address these barriers to care."

"It's tragic that the AIDS rate for Latinas is five times that for white women," stated Dr. Alberto Carrera, AIDS Alliance board member. "As an OB/GYN, my priority is to make sure the HIV-positive Latinas I serve get the best care out there for them and their children, and Title IV of the CARE Act makes that possible," continued Dr. Carrera, who cares for women and families affected by HIV/AIDS through the University of Puerto Rico School of Medicine.

"AIDS has impacted communities of color disproportionately since the beginning of the epidemic, a trend that has taken a tremendous toll on Latino communities and families," stated Paul Kawata, NMAC executive director. "Congress has a moral responsibility to fully fund the CARE Act to ensure that all Latinos living with HIV/AIDS have the access to care, treatment and support services they so desperately need."

About National Minority AIDS Council

The National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC) was founded in 1987 to develop leadership within communities of color to address challenges of HIV/AIDS. NMAC has responded to the needs of communities of color by developing programs aimed at enhancing the skills necessary to confront this health crisis, including a public policy education program, national and regional training conferences, a treatment and research program and numerous publications. Today, NMAC is an association of AIDS service organizations providing valuable information to community-based organizations, hospitals, clinics and other groups assisting individuals and families affected by the AIDS epidemic. NMAC's advocacy efforts funded through private funders and donors only. Visit NMAC online at www.nmac.org.

About AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth & Families

AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth & Families is a national training, education and advocacy organization. Our provider members include over 650 community-based organizations that serve over 53,000 pregnant women, children, youth and families affected by HIV/AIDS. Many of our programs are funded under Title IV of the Ryan White CARE Act, a program that reaches the

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vast majority of pregnant women and newborns affected by HIV/AIDS in the United States. Title IV provides comprehensive, family-centered care to women, children, youth and male caregivers affected by HIV/AIDS through 91 grants in 35 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Visit AIDS Alliance online at www.aids-alliance.org.

About Communities Advocating Emergency AIDS Relief (CAEAR) Coalition

The Communities Advocating Emergency AIDS Relief (CAEAR) Coalition represents more than 400 grantees under Title I and Title III of the Ryan White CARE Act, including the 51 major metropolitan areas most adversely affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, as well as providers and consumers of CARE Act-funded services. The CAEAR Coalition also advocates for adequate funding for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) in Title II of the CARE Act. As a leading voice in Washington, DC, for HIV/AIDS care and treatment and for over a decade, the CAEAR Coalition has led the successful annual federal appropriation advocacy effort for CARE Act Title I and Title III. Visit CAEAR online at www.caeear.org.

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