

U.S. SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN (D-MD) STATEMENT ON WORLD AIDS DAY

December 1, 2008, marks the 20th anniversary of World AIDS Day. This is a day to celebrate life and to redouble our commitment to conquer a pandemic that has left tens of millions around the world living with HIV or AIDS, including one million in the United States alone.

As a member of the U.S. Senate, I will continue to support increased funding for the medical researchers, doctors and healthcare workers who are leading the fight against this disease daily, alongside the children, men and women who are living with HIV or AIDS and stand on the frontlines battling for their lives.

After 20 years, HIV and AIDS continue to spread across the United States in the face of varying levels of investment in research, education and treatment. Minorities, women, and young people are being hit particularly hard. AIDS is the leading cause of death for African American women aged 25 to 34 and HIV rates among Hispanic women are increasing. The number of women living with HIV has tripled in the last two decades. At least half of all new infections are among people under the age of 25. Clearly, we must be doing more.

Worldwide, over 6800 people become infected with HIV every day - almost five people per minute. Approximately 5700 people die from AIDS every day, including about one child every minute. Fifteen million children around the world have been orphaned by AIDS, losing one or both parents to the disease.

The Reauthorization of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), passed by Congress and signed into law in July 2008, represents the largest contribution to disease eradication ever enacted into law by the U.S. government. The law provides \$48 billion for five years for PEPFAR, expands the number of focus countries, as well as enhanced emphasis on treatment. While these efforts are a significant step, we must continue to ensure sufficient resources and continually improve effectiveness on AIDS relief efforts and prevention methods for countries affected by AIDS and HIV within the U.S. and countries around the world.

I will continue my support for HIV/AIDS relief and assistance, research and treatment in the U.S. and across the globe. Our nation will continue to lead the world in support for patients, their families and communities, and the overall fight to overcome this disease. We will not stop until we have won and the threat has been eliminated.

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