

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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Julie Gerberding, MD, MPH  
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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
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Randall Tobias  
Administrator  
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Dear Dr. Gerberding, Administrator Tobias, and Dr. Dybul,

We're writing to call your attention to a recently released GAO report, "Spending Requirement Presents Challenges for Allocating Prevention Funding under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief." The report examines constraints on meeting local needs because of specific policy requirements under the President's HIV/AIDS initiative. Tension exists between three US policies: the comprehensive ABC approach to prevention, the requirement that two-thirds of prevention of sexual transmission funds should be used for abstinence until marriage, and the call for integrated programs that are responsive to epidemiology and cultural norms.

Many US government teams around the world find that the three requirements are often competing, not complementary interests:

- Meeting the abstinence-until-marriage requirement meant cutting other key programs such as prevention of mother to child transmission, prevention for HIV-positive individuals, and blood safety;
- Unclear policy guidance created confusion about permissible interventions. For example, married couples are not a high-risk group in the policy guidance, despite high levels of transmission within marriage in large epidemics;

- The requirements were applied to all funding streams, though the law only authorizes application to the account created to fund the President's initiative;
- 17 of 20 teams reported that the requirements challenge the ability to respond to local needs, and half were concerned that integrated programs were being undermined.

As a result of these concerns, GAO made the following recommendations:

- 1) The Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator should collect information and consider whether the abstinence until marriage spending requirement should apply only to funding streams designated under legislation.
- 2) Agencies should collect and report to Congress for further review any information about the spending requirement's effect on prevention programming.

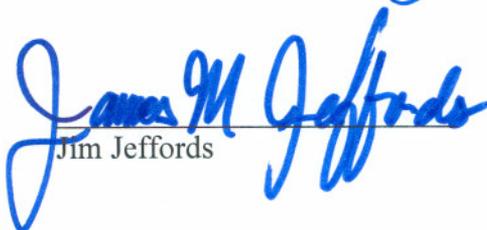
GAO's findings highlight critical constraints on successful US-supported HIV prevention programs. We urge that the abstinence-until-marriage spending requirement be applied only to the President's HIV/AIDS initiative funding stream, which totals over \$320 million for prevention in FY '06, thus freeing up \$35 million of other FY '06 prevention funds for programs that support local needs. With 90% of total prevention funding remaining adherent to the requirements, the commitment to abstinence-until-marriage would not be undermined by freeing up small, yet critical funds at USAID and CDC to respond to local needs.

We also request that agencies collect information on the effects of the spending requirements on prevention programming, and report the information to Congress. Congress is seeking to optimize current investments in global HIV/AIDS, and this information is critical in making mid-course corrections in policies and programs. As we prepare to support prevention programs in future authorizations, this information will improve legislation and policies to meet the needs of people affected by HIV/AIDS. Effective US investments in prevention are the backbone of our effort to turn the tide on the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and we look forward to working with you to achieve this needed progress.

Sincerely,

  
Edward M. Kennedy

  
Barbara Mikulski

  
Jim Jeffords

  
Dick Durbin

*Russ Feingold*

Russ Feingold

*Dianne Feinstein*

Dianne Feinstein

*Chuck Schumer*

Charles Schumer

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