



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 7, 2007

Help Reduce Women's Vulnerability to HIV:

Support H.R. 1713 the PATHWAY Act for a Comprehensive Prevention Strategy

Current Co-sponsors: Abercrombie, Allen, Berman, Blumenauer, C. Brown, Capuano, Carnahan, Carson, Cohen, Cummings, Fattah, Filner, Harman, Holt, Honda, Jackson Jr., Jackson Lee, Jefferson, Lantos, Lofgren, McCollum, McGovern, McNulty, George Miller, James Moran, Norton, Olver, Pastor, *Shays*, Tierney, Waters, Watt, Waxman, Wexler, Woolsey

Additional Co-sponsors from 109th: Berkeley, S. Bishop, Capps, Christensen, Clay, Clyburn, Conyers, Crowley, D. Davis, S. Davis, Delahunt, Doggett, Frank, A. Green, Grijalva, Gutierrez, A. Hastings, Hinchey, E.B. Johnson, Tubbs Jones, Kilpatrick, Kucinich, John Lewis, Maloney, McCarthy, McDermott, Meek, Meeks, B. Miller, D. Moore, G. Moore, Nadler, Neal, Pallone, Payne, D. Price, Rangel, Rush, Schakowsky, Schiff, R. Scott, Adam Smith, Solis, Stark, Tauscher, Towns, Van Hollen, Watson, Wynn

Dear Colleague:

An estimated 39.5 million people are infected with HIV/AIDS throughout the world today – the majority of them are women and girls. In sub-Saharan Africa, women and girls make up 60 percent of those infected with HIV/AIDS. For a number of reasons, women and girls are biologically, socially, and economically more vulnerable to HIV infection than men. However our current HIV prevention strategy fails to effectively target the needs of women and girls or to reduce and eliminate the factors that contribute to their increased vulnerability to HIV.

Last month the Institute of Medicine (IOM) released an exhaustive report two years in the making, which examines the progress made so far by our global HIV/AIDS program and offers several detailed proposals to ensure its long-term success. As part of its report, the IOM specifically recommends that our global AIDS initiative “should continue to increase its focus on the factors that put women at greater risk of HIV/AIDS and to support improvements in the legal, economic, educational, and social status of women and girls.”

In order to help meet the IOM’s recommendation, I invite you to join me as co-sponsor of H.R. 1713 the *Prevention Against Transmission of HIV for Women and Youth (PATHWAY) Act of 2007*, legislation that would revise our current global HIV Prevention strategy to emphasize the needs of women and girls.

The bill will require the President to develop a comprehensive, integrated, and culturally appropriate global HIV prevention strategy to address the factors that lead to gender disparities in the rate of HIV infection, including by:

- 1) Increasing access to female condoms;
- 2) Reducing the incidence of cross generational sex and early/child marriage;
- 3) Reducing violence against women;
- 4) Supporting the development of micro-enterprise and job training programs;
- 5) Expanding educational opportunities;
- 6) Protecting property and inheritance rights;
- 7) Coordinating HIV prevention services with existing health care services;
- 8) Promoting gender equality; and
- 9) Encouraging the creation and enforcement of equal rights for women.

The bill will also balance funding for our global HIV prevention programs by removing earmarks in current law that require 33 percent of our prevention funding to go towards undefined “abstinence-until-marriage” programs. According to both the IOM report and a recent GAO report, the abstinence until marriage earmark:

- “has greatly limited the ability of Country Teams to develop and implement comprehensive prevention programs”;
- “challenged their ability to develop interventions that are responsive to local epidemiology and social norms”; and
- forced cuts in funding for programs preventing mother to child transmission of HIV and other such proven interventions.

If you have questions regarding this legislation, or would like to co-sponsor, please contact Christos Tsentas of my staff at 225-2661.

Sincerely,

Barbara Lee, M.C.