

Contact:

Michael Kaplan, Executive Director

mkaplan@cascadeaids.org

Direct (503) 278.3810

Cell (202) 236.1396

Cascade AIDS Project



For immediate release

BJ Cavnor, Public Policy Coordinator

bcavnor@cascadeaids.org

Direct (503) 278.3873

Cell (503) 929.5668

President Obama Reauthorizes HIV/AIDS CARE Act Today

President also lifts 22-year ban prohibiting People living with HIV/AIDS from entering U.S.

PORTLAND, OR (October 30, 2009) – Cascade AIDS Project (CAP) applauds the critical steps taken today by President Obama, who signed the fourth reauthorization of the **Ryan White HIV/AIDS CARE (Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency) Act**. He also lifted a 22-year travel ban, which prohibited entry into our country of foreign nationals living with HIV/AIDS.

The president's message rang clear today, "This is a battle that's far from over, and it's a battle that all of us need to do our part to join. ...there are still **1.1 million people** living with HIV/AIDS in the United States, and more than **56,000 new infections** occur every single year." He focused on the necessity of ending the stigma and announced lifting the travel ban as another way of ending that stigma.

BJ Cavnor, CAP's Public Policy Coordinator has been working in his role on the issues the President recognized nationally today. "I was thrilled to hear the President address not only communities of people of color and gay men but also to tackle the issue of stigma as a barrier to HIV prevention, testing and education in America. We welcome the role of the White House and *Office of National AIDS Policy* (ONAP) seeking the public's inputs in developing a national HIV strategy and invite all Oregonians to contact CAP to be a part of this important dialogue. Cavnor also sees the impact of the President's lift on the travel ban as "a huge step in immigration rights and clearly puts us back on the world stage, making the fight against HIV/AIDS visible in the U.S."

CAP has worked steadily to eradicate stigma through visible events such as the **Screw Stigma! Project 150+** in honor of Oregon's sesquicentennial, when 75 HIV-positive individuals gathered to clean up Portland's South Park Blocks as well as creating the first HIV-positive AIDS Walk Portland team called **Positive Force**. On October 11, 2009, 100 people in red Screw Stigma! t-shirts led the 5k Walk with 10,000 others following.

The President addressed the epidemic here at home, calling attention to the above average infection rates in the urban centers and was clear about tackling this epidemic far more aggressively in the U.S. than we've seen in the past -- not only from our federal government, but also state and local governments, from local community organizations, and from places of worship.

The President also acknowledged the work the *Office of National AIDS Policy* (ONAP) is doing by conducting series of town hall meetings around the country to seek the input of Americans infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), estimates that **there is a new HIV infection every 9 ½ minutes**. This is the message behind the new education campaign launched by the US Department of Health and Human Service and the CDC earlier this year. For more information about the educational campaign visit www.nineandahalfminutes.org.

- more -

About Ryan White and the Ryan White CARE Act

In 1984, a 13-year-old boy from central Indiana contracted HIV/AIDS from a transfusion and doctors assured people that Ryan White posed no risk to his classmates or his community. However, ignorance was still widespread. People didn't yet understand or believe that the virus couldn't be spread by casual contact. Parents protested Ryan's attendance in class and some even pulled their kids out of school. Ultimately, things got so bad that the White family had to move to another town.

Ryan and his family became activist in the fight against HIV/AIDS. And, in 1990, the year Ryan passed away, two great friends and unlikely political allies, Ted Kennedy and Orrin Hatch, came together, and introduced the ***Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency Act -- the CARE Act*** -- which was later named after Ryan. Over the past 19 years, the CARE Act legislation has evolved from an emergency response into a comprehensive national program for the care and support of Americans living with HIV/AIDS. It helps communities that are most severely affected by this epidemic and often least served by our health care system, including minority communities, the LGBT community, rural communities, and the homeless. The CARE Act is often the only option for the uninsured and the underinsured - and provides life-saving medical services to more than half a million Americans every year, in every corner of the country. Today, the Ryan White CARE Act continues to provide critical funds for prevention, treatment, medications and programs for low to moderate-income people living with HIV.

About Cascade AIDS Project (CAP)

Cascade AIDS Project is the oldest and largest community-based provider of HIV services, including housing, education, and advocacy in Oregon and Southwest Washington. When CAP began 25 years ago, it had only two staff and a volunteer Board of Directors. Today, CAP encompasses 44 staff, more than 700 volunteers, and a budget of over \$4 million. Currently, in Oregon there are more than **7, 000 Oregonians** who are living with HIV/AIDS, approximately **300 new infections** and **100 deaths** linked to HIV and AIDS each year.

CAP's Mission

Lead efforts to **prevent** new HIV infections, **care** for people affected and infected by HIV/AIDS, **educate** communities to eliminate stigma and shame, and **advocate** for immediate action in combating the pandemic.

For more information: go to www.cascadeaids.org

###