



March 16, 2018

The Honorable Leonard Lance
U.S. House of Representatives
2352 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Joseph Kennedy III
U.S. House of Representatives
434 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support of the **“Eliminating Opioid Related Infectious Diseases Act of 2018”**

Dear Representative Lance and Representative Kennedy,

The AIDS Institute, a national non-profit organization dedicated to supporting and protecting health care access for people living with HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis, and other chronic and serious health conditions is pleased to offer its strong support of the **“Eliminating Opioid Related Infectious Diseases Act of 2018”**. This bill would provide much needed resources to state and local governments and others to help improve the nation’s response to the growing number of new cases of infectious diseases, such as HIV and hepatitis, due to injection drug use associated with the opioid crisis.

Communities across the country have watched with great concern as the opioid crisis has driven rates of new cases of infectious disease to skyrocketing levels. Between 2010 and 2015 new cases of hepatitis C (HCV) rose by a staggering 290 percent nationwide. It is estimated that 70 percent of those cases are a direct result of injection drug use. Deaths associated with HCV now surpass deaths associated with all 60 other notifiable infectious diseases combined. While we have been making progress in reducing the number of new HIV infections in the country, including the number of new cases associated with injection drug use, the opioid epidemic can reserve this trend. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that in 2015 there was a 4 percent increase in the number of new HIV cases associated with injection drug use. Certain communities and areas of the country, including those who are young and living in rural areas, are experiencing increases of HIV due to injection drug use.

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The Scott County, Indiana HIV and HCV outbreak cast a spotlight on the risk of rapid transmission of infectious disease among people who inject drugs and the lack of sufficient state and local resources to rapidly respond. The CDC has identified 220 counties across 26 states that are vulnerable to similar outbreaks. Your bill will help address future outbreaks and prevent them from happening in the first place.

Providing the CDC with additional resources for surveillance, testing, and linkage to care and treatment for infectious diseases exacerbated by the opioid crisis, along with prevention and education efforts, will go a long way in helping the country successfully combat increases in infectious disease cases. At the same time, these activities can link people to substance use treatment and reduce injection drug use, thus helping to curb the opioid crisis.

The AIDS Institute congratulates you both on the **“Eliminating Opioid Related Infectious Diseases Act of 2018,”** urge other members to support it, and hope Congress will pass it at its earliest opportunity. While we believe \$40 million per year is an excellent start, additional resources to combat the growing number of infectious diseases associated with injection drug use will be needed. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carl E. Schmid II". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "S".

Carl E. Schmid II
Deputy Executive Director