



July 16, 2008

The Honorable Joseph Biden
Chairman
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
439 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Biden,

On behalf of the National Hemophilia Foundation and the World Federation of Hemophilia, we would like to express our opposition to Senator Sessions' amendment to the Tom Lantos and Henry J. Hyde United States Global Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Reauthorization Act of 2008 to maintain the ban for people traveling to the US who are affected by HIV. Our organizations represent the 20,000 people in the US and more than 400,000 people worldwide affected by hemophilia. As a result of tainted blood and blood products, it is estimated that approximately 10% of the global hemophilia population, as well as some individuals with von Willebrand Disease and other rare bleeding disorders have been infected with HIV. We strongly oppose this amendment.

The National Hemophilia Foundation (NHF) is the largest US health care advocacy organization serving the needs of individuals with bleeding and clotting disorders. The World Federation of Hemophilia (WFH), an international organization dedicated to improving the lives of people with hemophilia and related bleeding disorders, has member organizations in more than 100 countries including the US and official recognition from the World Health Organization.

Repealing this discriminatory ban from our laws is a priority for our organizations. The provision that repeals the ban on HIV-positive visitors and immigrants must remain in the PEPFAR reauthorization legislation so that this unjust policy can be eliminated. This discrimination against people living with HIV and AIDS is inexcusable, and the policy has serious consequences.

The current requirements for travelers with HIV to come to the US are particularly difficult for people with both hemophilia and HIV. For example, travelers with HIV must bring an adequate supply of antiviral therapy and have sufficient assets or insurance to cover any medical care that they may need while in the US. Depending upon their country of origin, some people with hemophilia and HIV will likely be traveling with antiviral drugs and clotting factor, the medications used to treat these diseases. However, due to the high cost of treatment, it is unlikely that any but the wealthiest people could attest that they could fully cover the cost if an accident or medical crisis were to occur while visiting the United States. While participants in national and

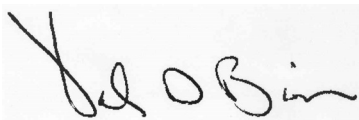
international bleeding disorder conferences are encouraged to purchase travel insurance, most plans do not cover pre-existing conditions. People affected by a bleeding disorder would likely not be able to meet these conditions.

It is time to eliminate this discriminatory practice and one of the remaining stigmas of living with HIV/AIDS. International visitors living with a bleeding disorder should not be singled out due to their having a bleeding disorder and/or HIV.

Not only is the ban on visitors with HIV problematic for the international bleeding disorders community, but the bleeding disorders community in the US is also negatively affected. Every two years, the WFH holds an international Congress, the leading global meeting for patients with bleeding disorders, researchers and health care professionals. Due to the significant impact of HIV on the global bleeding disorders community, since the enactment of the travel ban, the United States has been excluded from hosting international meetings of the WFH. Thus, patients and health care providers in the United States are missing an important opportunity to collaborate, share knowledge, and learn about the latest research and treatment options.

For these reasons, we oppose the amendment offered by Senator Sessions to the PEPFAR reauthorization legislation which would maintain the HIV travel ban. This amendment would negatively impact the domestic and international bleeding disorders communities. Therefore, we urge that it be defeated.

Sincerely,



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