



## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: July 20, 2009

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### **Infectious Diseases and HIV Experts Urge Congress to Fully Repeal Ban on Federal Funding for Needle Exchange Programs**

Arlington, Va. – The Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA), the HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA), and the Center for Global Health Policy applaud the House Appropriations Committee's passage of legislation that partially repeals the 20-year-old ban on federal funding for needle exchange programs. Unfortunately, restrictions that were added to the bill to limit the areas where these programs can operate will hinder urban areas in implementing these programs in the communities where they are most needed. As the appropriations bill for the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education departments for the 2010 fiscal year moves to the House floor, these organizations strongly urge the full House of Representatives to heed the scientific evidence, support this lifesaving intervention, and pass this legislation with a full repeal of the ban.

“An estimated 55,000 people are infected with HIV every year in this country—one new infection every 9.5 minutes,” said Daniel Kuritzkes, MD, FIDSA, HIVMA board member. “It’s crucial that we have a full arsenal of evidence-based measures to prevent new HIV infections, including needle exchange programs. We urge the House of Representatives to pass this appropriations bill without any restrictions on federal funding for these sorely needed and effective prevention efforts.”

The science is clear: Needle exchange programs are cost-effective, lifesaving, and do not promote drug use. They also connect hard-to-reach populations to primary health care and to addiction treatment. Intravenous drug users account for up to 16 percent of new HIV infections in the United States each year. They represent 20 percent of the more than 1 million people in this country living with HIV/AIDS and a majority of the 3.2 million Americans living with hepatitis C infection.

Removing the ban on the use of federal funding for needle exchange programs does not require states or cities to implement these programs. “The legislation simply allows states or localities—if they choose—to use federal HIV and hepatitis prevention funds for needle exchange programs, as part of their broader efforts to limit the spread of these infections,” said Deborah Cotton, MD, MPH, FIDSA, chair of IDSA’s National & Global Public Health Committee. “It’s a common-sense, science-based approach that is long overdue.”

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*The Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) is a professional society representing more than 8,600 infectious diseases physicians and scientists devoted to patient care, education, research, prevention, and public health. The HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA) is the professional home for more than 3,600 physicians, scientists and other health care professionals dedicated to the field of HIV/AIDS. Nested within IDSA, HIVMA promotes quality in HIV care and advocates policies that ensure a comprehensive and humane response to the AIDS pandemic informed by science and social justice.*

*The Center for Global Health Policy is an organization of physicians and scientists dedicated to promoting the effective use of U.S. funding for addressing the global HIV/AIDS and TB epidemics by providing scientific and policy information to policymakers, federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the media. The Center is a project of IDSA and HIVMA. All three organizations are based in Arlington, Va.*