



Mineola, NY— Today, U.S. Congressman Steve Israel (D-NY) applauded a decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals that will prevent Long Island from losing critical federal funds to serve individuals living with HIV/AIDS. The ruling, which came as a result of a lawsuit filed by Nassau and Suffolk Counties against the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), reaffirms Israel's assertion that HHS misinterpreted eligibility requirements for a region to receive additional HIV/AIDS funding under the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Modernization Act of 2006. Israel, along with Congressman Peter King and Senators Charles Schumer and Hillary Clinton, wrote two letters to HHS pointing out that according to the eligibility language, the Nassau-Suffolk region should continue to meet eligibility requirements.

"The Department of Health and Human Services was putting bureaucratic technicalities ahead of common sense and compassion in helping Long Islanders with AIDS," said Congressman Israel. "I'm glad we prevailed, but it really is unfortunate that it took a court decision to prevent the Department of Health of Human Services from slashing AIDS funding on Long Island."

Under HHS' initial interpretation of the reauthorized Ryan White CARE Act, a region must have both 2,000 new AIDS cases over the last five years as well as 3,000 living AIDS cases in order to be designated as an "eligible metropolitan area" (EMA) for additional funding. While Long Island met the requirement for living AIDS cases in the most recently reported CDC data, it fell short of the second requirement, with only 1,505 newly diagnosed cases for 2001-2005.

Israel, King, Schumer and Clinton argued that HHS misinterpreted the legislative language of the reauthorization and that, in fact, Nassau-Suffolk region does qualify as an EMA. They also demanded that HHS provide an immediate explanation on how to appeal its decision so that Long Islanders living with HIV/AIDS don't lose critical services provided in part through Ryan White CARE monies.

Under old formulas, Nassau and Suffolk counties received a total of more than \$6 million in federal funding to provide services to people living with HIV/AIDS, including transportation, housing and emergency food assistance, health education and child care. That ended in 2007 when HHS concluded that the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Modernization Act of 2006 excluded Long Island based on certain criteria. The Court of Appeals decision is expected to put Long Island back on track to receive additional HIV/AIDS funding as an EMA.