



Senator Feinstein to Introduce Legislation to Ensure Maximum Flexibility for Global HIV/AIDS Prevention Funding

- GAO report released today is critical of Administration's 'abstinence earmark' policy -

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Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today outlined plans for legislation to ensure that affected nations are given the maximum flexibility they need to develop multi-pronged HIV prevention programs. The Senator's announcement came following a GAO report that is critical of the Administration's 'abstinence earmark' for international HIV prevention funding,

Currently, a Congressional earmark requires that one-third of all U.S. funds for global HIV/AIDS prevention are designated for "abstinence-until-marriage" programs. The GAO report released today concluded that this policy inhibits the ability of African countries and HIV/AIDS country teams to design a prevention program that addresses the clear needs of local communities.

"The GAO report released today clearly demonstrates that we are not doing everything we can to protect high-risk populations around the world from the transmission of HIV/AIDS," Senator Feinstein said.

"I believe that designating one-third of U.S. global HIV/AIDS prevention funds for abstinence-only programs is the wrong approach. It means less money for funds to prevent mother to child transmission; less money to promote a comprehensive prevention message to high risk groups such as sexually active youth; and less funds to protect the blood supply. And the GAO report released today agrees. In fact, the report concludes that the Administration's 'abstinence-before-marriage' earmark inhibits local efforts on the ground to stop the spread of this dreadful pandemic.

So I will be introducing legislation to ensure that those who are at risk for contracting HIV receive the full range of information, including abstinence and condom use, they need to protect themselves. We also must make sure that other critical prevention programs – such as blood safety and mother-to-child transmission – are not negatively affected by abstinence earmarks.

Instead of tying the hands of people on the ground and taking funds away from other much needed prevention programs, we should give these countries the maximum flexibility they need to develop a multi-pronged HIV prevention program. We should emphasize the comprehensive prevention message of the 'ABC' approach: abstinence, being faithful to one's partner, and condom use.

There are more than 40 million people infected with HIV/AIDS around the world. And each day, thousands more are infected with this deadly virus. Congress should support legislation that addresses the whole prevention puzzle and simply gives local communities the necessary resources to implement programs that are effective in their communities. By doing so, we can achieve the goal we all share: stopping the spread of the global HIV pandemic.”

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