

**INVEST IN THE WELL-BEING OF AMERICAN COMMUNITIES**  
**HEALTH CARE PRIORITIES IN THE BUDGET*****Background***

The recent budget request issued by the President provided \$64.2 billion for programs funded under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), a 1% decrease from the previous fiscal year. While there are some promising increases to certain programs, including a boost to community health centers, several programs critical to the Latino community are targeted for substantial cuts. For example, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) faces cuts by more than \$54 million, with major cuts to prevention programs and to programs of regional and national significance. The President's request also fails to address the rising problem of HIV/AIDS in the Latino community by decreasing funding for the Minority AIDS Initiative and flat-funding most programs supported under the Ryan White CARE Act. Moreover, the President's budget request includes a dangerous Medicaid overhaul which reduces the nation's largest health insurance program by \$60.1 billion over the next ten years.

***NCLR's Position***

NCLR believes that increasing HHS funding for programs that target the Latino community with effective and innovative community-based programs is essential to improving the health and well-being of Latinos.

NCLR encourages Congress to increase the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration funding, particularly for programs allowing community-based organizations to provide preventative health care and treatment services. We encourage members to support SAMHSA at a funding level of \$3.6 billion.

NCLR also urges Congress to increase funding for both the Minority AIDS Initiative and the Ryan White CARE Act program. While current requests for Ryan White CARE Act represent an increase in overall funding for the program, the new funding is solely devoted to the AIDS Drug Assistance program. Freezing prevention programs cuts important programs that help stop the spread of AIDS. The Minority AIDS Initiative, whose funding has been whittled down for the past several years, will be unable to fulfill its mission of mitigating AIDS in minority communities if its programs are not supported.

NCLR also urges members of Congress to oppose the massive cuts to Medicaid, which will be detrimental to the Latino community.

***Why Funding is Important***

**There is a need to develop programs that provide culturally-competent mental health care in community settings.** A report issued by the U.S. Surgeon General suggested that Hispanic-Americans are in great need of mental health services. Only 24% of Hispanic-Americans with

mental health problems are receiving the appropriate care. In addition, several studies point to higher misdiagnoses rates due to cultural and linguistic barriers.

**Without funds devoted to the prevention of AIDS, this disease will continue to spread among Latinos.** In 2003, Hispanics were 13.7% of the population, yet they represented 20.3% of the new AIDS cases. Funding for prevention programs represent the smallest portion of the domestic AIDS budget (5%).

**Cuts to Medicaid will shut Latinos out of the public health insurance system.** Latinos have the highest uninsurance rates in the country (32.7%) and are already marginalized from our nation's safety-net programs. When applying for insurance programs, such as Medicaid, they often face multiple legal, linguistic, and cultural barriers that delay or prevent their entrance into the programs.

***For more information***

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Making a Difference for Hispanic Americans