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## **ARCW Applauds Sen. Baldwin, Rep. Pocan for Introduction of HIV Clinical Services Improvement Act**

**MILWAUKEE...** HIV patients who receive health care from the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin (ARCW) or other HIV clinics across the country would see an increase in services and access to care under a proposal introduced today by Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Congressman Mark Pocan (D-WI) and their colleagues in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

“Senator Baldwin and Representative Pocan’s leadership is truly commendable. Unfettered access to high quality health care for people with HIV is a key component of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy,” said ARCW President and Chief Executive Officer Michael Gifford. “Today in the United States, the difference between a long, healthy life or rapid disease progression and significant illness for HIV patients is having a primary care physician who is knowledgeable about treating HIV disease. This bill will make sure that more Americans with HIV have access to this care.”

The bill, known as the HIV Clinical Services Improvement Act, would allow health care clinics funded under Part C of the federal Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program to be eligible to receive the same Medicaid reimbursement rates as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). Currently, HIV clinics that are not an FQHC receive substantially lower reimbursement rates for providing the same high quality health care.

“Ryan White clinics across the United States are incredibly successful in helping their patients keep or regain their health,” said ARCW Vice President for Government and Public Relations Bill Keeton. “Today, 86% of ARCW patients, and 75% of patients in Ryan White clinics across the United States, are achieving HIV viral suppression – the most important clinical indicator of successful HIV treatment. These clinics produce great results and need to be strengthened.”

There are more than one million people living with HIV in the United States today, but only 30% are achieving viral suppression. Access and retention in health care and adherence to medication regimens remain significant barriers to health for an overwhelming majority of HIV patients across the country – many of whom live in poverty. Even in Wisconsin – long identified as a national leader in its response to HIV – approximately 54% of the roughly 8,200 HIV patients are not achieving viral suppression.

“This legislation will ensure that clinics across the country have the resources they need to provide health care to their existing 275,000 patients and their share of the 50,000 Americans who are newly diagnosed with HIV every year,” Keeton said. “While the number of patients

turning to our clinics has increased 74% since 2001, federal funding for Ryan White clinics has increased only 8%. If we are to defeat HIV and realize an AIDS-free generation, we must make sure all HIV patients – no matter where they live – have access to care.”

ARCW is part of a national coalition of groups supporting the HIV Clinical Services Improvement Act that includes AIDS United, the Ryan White Medical Providers Coalition, the HIV Medicine Association and other AIDS Service Organizations across the United States.

***ABOUT ARCW:***

The AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin is home to the ARCW Medical Center – Wisconsin’s largest and fastest growing HIV health care system. Through its integrated medical, dental and mental health clinics along with pharmacy and dedicated social services, approximately 3,700 HIV patients across Wisconsin gain the health care and social services they need for long-term survival with HIV disease from ARCW.

ARCW is also a leading provider of innovative and aggressive prevention services to help at-risk individuals to stay free of HIV.

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