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Our Opinion

Post-Standard Editorial

Don't Siphon Off HIV Funds

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When Congress finally indicated it was ready to make a move on renewing the Ryan White CARE Act that provides \$2 billion to HIV/AIDS patients for local services and programs, it was the wrong one, unfortunately.

Instead of voting to keep the existing funding formula that sends more money to states with the most AIDS patients, the new proposal would shift the already short supply of dollars to Southern states with fewer AIDS patients.

Surely the South is experiencing growing needs, too; but the new formula could mean New York, which has more AIDS patients than any other state, gets \$78 million less over four years, according to Stephen Waldron, coordinator of the Central New York HIV Care Network.

So, it is welcomed news that an objection Tuesday in the Senate will keep this revision from passing, at least for now.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recommended routine testing for all Americans ages 13 to 64. Whether or not that happens, the government must be ready with funds to help the growing numbers of those who test positive for HIV. As the proposed formula stands, it's not enough, and it will take away money from states such as New York.

New York holds 7 percent of the U.S. population but has 17 percent of the nation's AIDS cases; 75 percent of New Yorkers living with HIV/AIDS are persons of color.

The federal government should have allocated more money overall for HIV/AIDS care, and not been content to let states fight it out over scarce dollars in the face of growing need everywhere.

With better drugs and treatment, more people are living longer with AIDS - and they need local services and programs the act was created to provide.

Requiring HIV testing would only amplify the need - and the funding disparity for New York. As Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., says, "assistance cannot come at the expense of those who also need the assistance."