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STATEMENT OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY ON WORLD AIDS DAY

Washington, D.C.-- Senator Kennedy released the following statement today in recognition of World AIDS Day:

“AIDS is the greatest pandemic of our time. It affects men, women and children on every continent in the world. Nearly 40 million people are infected with HIV worldwide, and the disease causes 2.8 million deaths every year. Experts predict that in the next 25 years, AIDS will become the third leading cause of death worldwide, after heart disease and stroke. AIDS is a global problem that requires a global solution.

Over the past decade, we have made significant progress here at home in both the prevention of the disease and its treatment. We have nearly doubled the life expectancy of people living with the HIV virus.

Large numbers of Americans, however, are still without access to the lifesaving drugs and primary health care and support services they need. The federal government must continue its commitment to combating the disease. We must do more to provide the funding needed to test for the virus, and provide care and counseling for those affected. We in Congress should reauthorize the Ryan White Care Act without further delay.

Because AIDS knows no borders, the United States must continue to be a leader internationally on the issue. Our country is blessed with incredible resources, both human and financial, and we have a moral obligation to use them to help those who suffer so much from the disease in other lands. We must work with other countries and their governments to provide affordable protection and treatment to all people, no matter where they live.

Although the challenge is great, our ability to work together for the common good is greater. On World AIDS Day, it is important that each of us recommit ourselves to working together to defeat this devastating pandemic.”

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