



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**December 18, 2015**

**CONTACT:** Kate Moraras, Hepatitis B Foundation  
(703) 632-4364 / [kate.moraras@hepb.org](mailto:kate.moraras@hepb.org)

**Congressional Spending Bill Inadequately Invests in Viral Hepatitis**  
*Hepatitis Prevention Programs Receive \$2.7 Million Increase*

WASHINGTON, DC - Today, Congress is set to pass an Omnibus Spending Bill to fund the federal government through the 2016 fiscal year. The legislation, headed for votes this week, funds the Division of Viral Hepatitis (DVH) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at \$34 million, a \$2.7 million increase over the current funding level.

Hep B United thanks Congress for an increase in funding for hepatitis prevention programs, but is disappointed that the funding level falls far short of the President's budget proposal of \$62.8 million, which would have doubled spending for the CDC's DVH. The amount allocated for CDC's DVH is even below the \$5 million proposed in the Senate bill for Appropriations introduced earlier this year.

Funding to combat viral hepatitis in the United States continues to be inadequate, and does not come close to reflecting the burden of disease, with over 5 million people living with chronic hepatitis B and C, and highly alarming rates of new infections.

In the U.S., over 2 million Americans are living with chronic hepatitis B infection, only 25 percent are aware of their infection, and less than 10 percent of infected individuals are able to access care and receive treatment.

Without early diagnosis or intervention, 1 in 4 of those with chronic HBV infection will die prematurely from liver cancer or cirrhosis of the liver. In the U.S., the incidence of liver cancer is increasing while most other cancer rates continue to decline or stabilize. Preventing hepatitis B infections can prevent primary liver cancer – hepatitis B is preventable with a safe and effective vaccine providing life-long protection.

The need for increased funding to comprehensively respond to viral hepatitis, increase surveillance, testing, education, and linkage to care and treatment, is more urgent than ever. Hep B United encourages Congress to make meaningful investments in fiscal year 2017 to combat viral hepatitis with the goal of eliminating hepatitis B and C in the U.S. Action must be made quickly to curb these epidemics before it is too late.

## **About Hep B United**

Hep B United is a national coalition to address the public health challenge of hepatitis B. The goal of Hep B United is to support local community coalition efforts across the U.S. to increase hepatitis B awareness, screening, vaccination and linkage to care for all Americans, but in particular, for high-risk Asian American and Pacific Islander populations who are disproportionately impacted. For more information on Hep B United, please visit <http://hepbunited.org>.

###