

Rep. Peter Welch voted Wednesday to provide life-saving care, treatment and support services to nearly half a million Americans living with HIV and AIDS.

The Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Extension Act (S. 1793), which will provide funding to cities, states and nonprofits to assist in core medical support services for people living with HIV and AIDS, passed by a vote of 408 to 9. The bill cleared the Senate earlier this month and now heads to President Obama's desk for signature.

In 2007, 484 Vermonters were living with HIV/AIDS. The state currently receives \$1.4 million in funding through the Ryan White Program.

"This program provides essential resources to Vermonters living with HIV/AIDS. By funding treatment and support services to those suffering from this epidemic, we can make our communities healthier and help prevent the further spread of HIV/AIDS," Welch said.

Established in 1990, the Ryan White Program has made it easier for HIV/AIDS patients to afford the costly medical treatments they need to survive. Today's extension will increase the authorization level for each part of the program by five percent a year for the next four years to ensure continued access to vital health benefits for low-income, uninsured and underinsured Americans.

It also makes investments to improve care in regions of the country with the highest rates of HIV/AIDS and helps to eliminate disparities in access to care among racial and ethnic groups. It increases funding for the Comprehensive Care program, which provides grants to states for health care and support services for those with HIV/AIDS. These grants fund home- and community-based health care and support services and an AIDS drug assistance program.