

Wednesday, September 9th, Congressman Quigley spoke on the House floor, urging his fellow members to vote to reauthorize the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Act which provides care to over a half million victims of AIDS each year.

The full text of the Congressman's speech is as follows:

Madam Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to act swiftly to reauthorize the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Act before it sunsets at the end of this month.

Nineteen years ago, Ryan White, a young man who contracted HIV from a routine blood transfusion for his hemophilia, died from AIDS.

Out of Ryan's death came life – in the form of the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Modernization Act – which now provides care to 500,000 victims of AIDS and their families each year.

The Ryan White Act is considered the “payer of last resort,” providing assistance to those who would otherwise go without care.

Take the story of Susan, a college-grad from my state of Illinois, who - because of her HIV - cannot get insurance.

Susan explains that “even if I could get health insurance, there would be no way for me to afford it.”

Last year Susan's drugs alone cost her \$41,000 – that's \$5,000 more than the median income of female living in Illinois.

Susan was able to stay healthy for awhile, but a few years ago she became sick, and after

going deep in debt was finally able to qualify for Medicaid.

Susan explains that she wants to be a productive member of society and do what she loves for a living — but the system has forced her to choose between living off the government to obtain medical care or working and losing it all.

Sadly, Susan is not alone – 44,000 people in Illinois live with HIV/AIDS, and the Ryan White Act provides services to 10,000 of those.

Susan's story is surely a distressing one – but her tale should spur us to question a system in which people with chronic conditions are forced to live below the poverty line in order access government healthcare assistance.

This story, and so many others like it, should remind us just how truly important it is to reform our healthcare system.

Reauthorizing the Ryan White Treatment Modernization Act is imperative – and so is passing health care reform.

While Ryan White is gone – Susan is still here – and we owe it to both to work together to swiftly pass both the Ryan White Act and healthcare reform.