

Opening Statement of Senator Herb Kohl
Special Committee on Aging Hearing
"HIV Over Fifty: Exploring the New Threat"
May 12, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We thank you for bringing the important issue of HIV and AIDS in the senior population in front of the Aging Committee today.

While much attention has been devoted to HIV and AIDS prevention for younger Americans, our growing aging population makes it necessary for us to consider how HIV and AIDS will begin to affect seniors in greater numbers. This has been an issue that has been overlooked for too long. I hope this hearing will serve to educate older people on the prevention of HIV and AIDS.

Although the majority of HIV and AIDS diagnoses are among persons between the ages of 25 and 39, there is a growing awareness that those 50 and older are also at risk. HIV and AIDS cases are expected to increase as people of all ages survive longer due to new drug therapies. In addition, we need to make sure seniors have the information they need to prevent new infections from occurring. This is not a population that we can afford to ignore in our HIV and AIDS prevention and treatment programs.

We look forward to hearing from our expert witnesses today who can help us better understand the challenges of educating older Americans, as well as their health care providers, on this difficult subject. We also look forward to hearing suggestions for ways we can effectively stem this growing health problem and treat this unique population.

Again, we thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing. I look forward to working with you to move this important issue forward.