

# AIDS Foundation OF CHICAGO

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## Support HB 2578 (Howard) African-American HIV/AIDS Response Act

House Bill 2578, introduced by Rep. Constance Howard (D-Chicago), provides a comprehensive plan to address HIV/AIDS in the African-American community, a population that is disproportionately impacted by the epidemic. Consider:

- In Illinois, 14,682 AIDS cases have been reported among African-Americans in Illinois since 1981, out of 30,139 total AIDS cases.
- Two out of three women (66%) living with HIV in Illinois are African-American.
- African-Americans represent 15% of the state's total population, yet make up 48% of AIDS cases.
- The rate of HIV infection among Illinois prisoners is estimated to be five times higher than the general population, and African Americans are disproportionately incarcerated in Illinois.

HB 2578 addresses the intersection of HIV and corrections, makes HIV testing available in state offices, and assists welfare recipients. The bill:

- **Expands voluntary HIV counseling and testing in Illinois prisons and jails.** The Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) and county jails would offer *voluntary* HIV counseling and testing to inmates when they arrive in prison, during their incarceration, and prior to release.
- **Enhances reentry services.** IDOC and county jails would offer HIV-positive inmates who are released transitional case management and referrals to support services. In addition, IDOC and county jails would make written information about HIV/AIDS available to visitors.
- **Provides free HIV testing in state offices serving high-risk communities.** Busy state offices, such as driver's license facilities or public aid offices, will provide space to community based organizations to conduct HIV testing and prevention education.
- **Allows HIV-positive welfare recipients to request work requirement changes due to illness.** This provision will assist HIV-positive individuals or sick individuals who do not meet Supplemental Security Income standards for disability, yet are unable to perform some tasks due to illness or medication side effects. Welfare recipients can request a change in their education, training, and employment program if they are disabled, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Illinois Department of Human Services staff will evaluate requests.

For more information, contact John Peller, Director of State Affairs, (312) 922-2322.