

Good Morning City Council Members:

My name is Joann Montes. I've been living with HIV since November of 1999. Since the last time I stood before you on November 5, 2003, there have been some increases. 20% to be exact. This percentage represents over 6,000 individuals diagnosed with HIV in Chicago since 2003. Yet there has not been an increase in HIV prevention funding since. Some of the things we already know are that HIV prevention works, that Chicago has a very good prevention plan and not enough dollars to implement it, although you've probably heard this statement repeatedly today.

I want to tell you about the men and women that come up positive in the agency I work for and tell me, "I didn't know it could be this way." I want to tell you about the IDUs who continue to share needles with one another, thus spreading the virus in our communities, your communities. I want to tell you about our teen sons and daughters who say "thank you for telling me about how to protect myself."

Had my late husband known that he could infect me after only one exposure to the virus, had he only learned how to properly clean and dispose of "works"! It is too late for the "would be's and should be's." We can't do anything about the lack of proper funding we had in the past two years. But we can do something about it today.

Esteemed members of the Council, you can decide to support a much needed \$1.7 million dollar increase for HIV prevention in 2007. You can decide to consistently commit to fight against HIV/AIDS in our city. Those of us testifying before you today and the social workers, case managers, doctors, and all support staff are doing our part to stem the spread of the disease. I ask that you do your part to protect our families, our communities.

Thank you.

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