

AIDS Foundation OF CHICAGO

200 W. Jackson Blvd., Suite 2200
Chicago, IL 60606

Tel (312) 922-2322
Fax (312) 922-2916

Open Letter to Governor Quinn, Senate President Cullerton, House Speaker Madigan, Senate Minority Leader Radogno and House Minority Leader Cross: Please Save HIV/AIDS Services

June 17, 2009

The Honorable Pat Quinn
Governor, State of Illinois
100 W. Randolph, 16-100
Chicago, IL 60601

The Honorable John Cullerton
President, Illinois Senate
1051 West Belmont
Chicago, IL 60657

The Honorable Christine Radogno
Senate Minority Leader
410 Main Street
Lemont, IL 60439

The Honorable Michael Madigan
Speaker, Illinois House
6500 South Pulaski Road
Chicago, IL 60629

The Honorable Tom Cross
House Minority Leader
24047 W. Lockport St, Ste 213
Plainfield, IL 60544

Dear Leaders of Illinois Government:

On behalf of the estimated 44,000 people living with HIV in Illinois, and the 150 member agencies of the AIDS Foundation of Chicago's (AFC) Service Providers Council, I am writing to express deep concern about the looming state budget cuts.

Now more than ever, Illinoisans need strong leadership to safeguard the integrity of health and human services on which more than 1 in 10 state residents depend. We call on you to immediately put the needs of vulnerable, low-income Illinoisans first and pass a budget that includes sufficient revenue to meet the state's health and human service needs.

Illinois cannot afford to lose ground in the fight against HIV/AIDS, but that is exactly what will happen if these state budget cuts take place. This human tragedy can and must be averted, but there is no magic bullet. Illinois government cannot balance the budget with service cuts. I urge you to immediately enact budget reforms that increase revenue while protecting low-income people from deep financial burdens. In addition, I believe some measure of tax increases that are fair and broadly distributed across the economy will most likely be needed to close the state budget gap.

Without new revenue, more than \$15 million in HIV-related state funding will be eliminated, causing irreparable harm to low-income people with HIV/AIDS who will be denied essential services. Without additional revenue, HIV-related service cuts will be severe and unprecedented. Some highlights:

- **AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP):** For the first time ever, Illinois could be forced to severely ration access to lifesaving medications for low-income Illinoisans who have no other means to meet their HIV treatment needs. An estimated \$2.9 million in ADAP funding could be put in jeopardy.

- **Housing and Services:** As many as 100 low-income people with HIV could be displaced and made homeless as a result of \$2 million or more in housing and services funding cuts. Projected staffing reductions would mean that people with HIV would have no one to help treat their addiction, mental illness, and other chronic health conditions.
- **HIV Prevention:** Over \$7 million for HIV prevention programs could be eliminated from the state budget, severely curtailing access to HIV testing services, prevention education, and outreach programs. Services targeting people of color, who have the highest rates of new HIV infections, are on the chopping block. A nationally-recognized Illinois program that helps HIV-positive pregnant women deliver healthy, HIV-negative babies could see its funding cut by 50 percent or more. At least 4,000 fewer HIV tests would be conducted outside Chicago. The pace of new HIV transmissions would undoubtedly increase.
- **HIV and corrections:** \$1.25 million could be cut from programs that help HIV-positive people successfully return to the community from prison or jail. This program successfully helps formerly incarcerated individuals stabilize their lives and health, preventing new HIV transmissions and reducing recidivism.

An additional \$2 million may be cut from department staffing, social marketing programs, trainings, and other services.

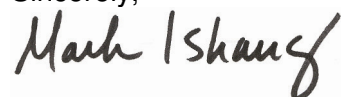
For the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, the proposed budget cuts could result in a funding reduction of more than \$725,000, the vast majority of which supports community-based HIV/AIDS services at 15 community-based agencies statewide.

Without real budgetary reform, hundreds of essential jobs in the public health and HIV care and prevention sectors will be eliminated. The lives of low-income people living with HIV would be immeasurably disrupted by layoffs of case managers and other service providers. Trained HIV prevention outreach and testing specialists would become jobless, leaving fewer options for people at risk of HIV to learn their HIV status and adopt safer behaviors. Culturally and linguistically competent agencies, which already struggle to survive, will likely vanish.

Governor Quinn, I urge you to immediately and publicly declare that you will veto the inadequate budget that lawmakers approved. Please call Illinois lawmakers to Springfield to negotiate a real and lasting budgetary solution that aligns state government with the needs of its citizens.

Please contact me or John Peller, Director of Government Relations, at (312) 922-2322 if you would like more information on the impact of the proposed budget on people with HIV.

Sincerely,



Mark Ishaug
President/CEO