

**Testimony of Jim Nelson
Executive Director
Illinois Public Health Association**

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**HIV Prevention Funding Hearing
House Human Services Appropriation Committee**

Chairman Feigenholtz, Representative Mulligan and Members of the Committee. My name is Jim Nelson, and I am the Executive Director of the Illinois Public Health Association. I am here today with several of our HIV prevention partners, to speak with you regarding our concern over the continuation of the HIV prevention program and the system we have built here in Illinois and to ask that we work to restore \$ 2.27 million in state funding to reverse HIV prevention budget cuts and that we work together to allocate funding for the 2011 budget adequate to continue a statewide prevention system

IPHA has partnered with the Illinois Public Health Department (IDPH) to provide HIV prevention outreach oversight and management in several regions across Illinois. IPHA serves as lead agent for HIV prevention services in suburban Cook, Rockford, East St. Louis Carbondale, Peoria and the Quad cities. Not only do we act in a fiduciary role and support for these community based providers, we also work to provide training, information of best practices, and local evaluation of prevention services by community based organizations.

Who needs HIV prevention services? We all do. Anyone can become infected with HIV! Science based Prevention programs in Illinois are designed to target at risk populations and to promote widespread HIV education. Counseling, testing, risk reduction and targeted prevention are all essential components of an effective HIV prevention program and Illinois has followed the CDC lead in providing these services. It is no small effort to slow the rise in new infections but the lasting benefits when done are central to HIV management, detection and control.

Individuals who are not HIV positive benefit from prevention education by learning the basics of HIV and how to protect themselves from HIV infection. It also presents an opportunity to dispel the myths, prejudice and misinformation about HIV and those who are positive. For those testing positive, this system is the first step in getting them education, medicine case management and the tools they will need to survive as well as learning the challenges of the disease. At IPHA we firmly believe, that with any chronic disease, education, prevention efforts and model systems of support will not only save lives but it is one of our most cost effective tools for public health.

On August 26, 2009 the IDPH notified their community prevention partners of the **possible** elimination of GRF funding for HIV prevention services and that state funds previously used for prevention would be shifted to sustain the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP). It was becoming very apparent in th HIV community of the rapid growth of the ADAP. However, I am not sure even we saw the ramifications of this growth in August.

On December 22nd 2009, the IPHA was notified by the Department of Public Health of significant budget reductions for statewide prevention services for contracts that were to commence on January 1, 2010. These reductions from IDPH eliminated all state GRF for prevention services and allocated \$1.4 million for the prevention regions for 6 months. What is critical for you to understand is that the funding provided by IDPH for six months was all the federal funds allocated to the State for the entire 2010 calendar year. There would be no federal dollars available for prevention services after June 30, 2010.

On December 28, 2009 the final conference call with IDPH was held to discuss the pending funding allocation and the formula that would be used for the cuts. Notice to our providers went out January 4, 2010. To be clear, IPHA worked with the IDPH to allocate the remaining resources based on epidemiological data provided by the department as well as past performance of community based organizations. There was nothing arbitrary about the budget reductions or funding elimination

For the next 6 months **only federal prevention** funds totaling \$1.4 million dollars will be available to fund prevention programs across Illinois. Some 50 local AIDS service organizations in southern Illinois, western Illinois, central Illinois and suburban Cook will be dramatically cut or eliminated. Included in the cuts are funds to the City of Chicago totaling some \$750,000.

The catastrophic cuts will reduce or eliminate counseling and testing in many regions of Illinois as well as referral to case management, elimination of peer based education services, partner notification and counseling and we fear more HIV positive persons will not be detected and assisted in a timely manner. Time is a key factor when dealing with HIV. An early diagnosis and detection will ultimately provide for better outcomes for the individual and lower medical costs in the out years.

The current economic crisis is having devastating consequences on most state and local governments. Amid current year budget cuts, many state and local governments are preparing for even deeper cuts to next year's budgets, resulting from shortfalls of billions of dollars that face the nation's governors. In many jurisdictions, HIV and other public health programs and services that were once held harmless from across-the-board and targeted funding cuts are now finding themselves at risk of losing millions of dollars in critical resources. Among these programs, many state and local health departments are preparing for the consequences of a dismal funding scenario next year.

In short, the investment made by this State, by the Illinois General Assembly in providing these services to all Illinois residents will abruptly end on June 30, 2010 without state support. There are no federal funds to rely on after June 30, 2010 under this current scenario.

I am joined here today by several of the State's best HIV prevention providers and I would ask that you give them a moment to explain who they are, where they are from and what the results will be from these cuts.

