

Hello,

My name is Stephanie Altman. I am a lawyer at Health and Disability Advocates, a non-profit organization in Chicago. Each year, we represent thousands of low-income persons in the Chicago area who are trying to access government income support and health insurance programs. Many of our clients are HIV positive or at risk of contracting HIV and in desperate need of health coverage. Unfortunately, many of them do not qualify, even though they have high health care needs and low incomes, for the state medical assistance programs such as Medicaid.

As such, they are often left without coverage for the basic health care and may progress towards illness and disability quickly. Increased funding for prevention can avoid the most serious of these health care issues and save health care dollars in the long run.

The City of Chicago funding for HIV prevention services helps to fill this dangerous gap in prevention and health services. On behalf of our clients, we support the proposed increase in funding for HIV prevention funding to provide a safety net for our clients and to respond to Chicago's growing HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the City Council of Chicago on this important issue.