

Good morning City Council Members:

My name is Joann Montes. I was born and raised in Chicago. My upbringing did not include education on HIV prevention, because HIV is not the topic of choice in Hispanic circles. My mother, as well intended and caring as she is, did not feel comfortable talking about some of the very important issues that every teen needs to learn to prevent HIV infection, among other things.

Well, I grew up, got married and had children, and got a divorce. Then, in March of 1999 I remarried a man from my local church and a recovered IV drug user. He was not forthcoming with his HIV status, because (he says) he was scared to tell and he thought it would take several exposures to the virus before I became infected. He thought he had time. Well, he was wrong. After getting a cold that would not go away, I decided to get tested. This is how I discovered I was HIV+ in November of 1999.

At this time, I am not advocating for myself. I'm already infected. I appeal to your good judgment on behalf of that teenager who doesn't know how to protect him or her. I'm appealing to you on behalf of the men and women in the city of Chicago who are at risk of HIV infection because of the lack of education. I happen to know that education is prevention. Nonetheless, prevention costs money. Mayor Daley's proposed 2004 budget includes only a \$100,000 increase in city funding for HIV prevention. AIDS cases have risen by 32% since 1997 while city funding has decreased by 8%. This is unacceptable. I urge you, esteemed members of the City Council, to stand up for your constituents and your communities and support an amendment for a \$1 million dollar increase in 2004 for HIV prevention.

Thank you.