

Illinois HIV Care Connect

Cook/Collar Illinois HIV Care Connect

February 2, 2010

The Honorable Sara Feigenholtz
Illinois State Representative, 12th District
1051 W. Belmont
Chicago IL 60657

Dear Representative Feigenholtz:

As the legislative and budget season begins, I want to thank you for being one of the legislature's most vocal and effective advocates for HIV prevention and care programs. This will be a difficult budget year. All of us at the AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) share your anxiety about the future of HIV care, prevention, and AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) services.

As you know, AFC administers state-funded HIV care services in Cook and the Collar Counties. The Cook/Collar consortia is home to 85% people living with HIV/AIDS in Illinois. Two-thirds of Cook County clients are African American, 16% are Latino, 13% are white and 5% are of other or unknown race/ethnicity. Cook County clients are overwhelmingly very low income. Two out of three have an annual income of less than \$10,000. One-third of Cook clients are uninsured, one-third have Medicaid, and the remaining third have insurance from other sources.

AFC supports fundamental budget reform to increase revenue. This is the only viable way to save HIV services and other essential education, health, and human services so many Illinoisans depend on. We are committed to advocating for new revenue before we call for service cuts.

While the Cook/Collar Consortia supports efforts to plan and consider reasonable options at different funding levels, we cannot support program changes or eligibility reductions that would disrupt access to vital supports, including HIV medications, HIV care services, or HIV prevention programs.

Efforts to contain costs must be matched with an elevated commitment to continuity of care. Too many HIV-positive people face barriers in their lives that affect service access. ADAP must remain a compassionate haven that helps people obtain the lifesaving medications they could not otherwise access.

We agree that Illinois must stop robbing prevention and care to pay for ADAP. The full continuum of AIDS services is needed as part of a comprehensive response to HIV/AIDS in our state. A fiscal shell game will only compound future monetary pressures on ADAP and other health and human service programs.

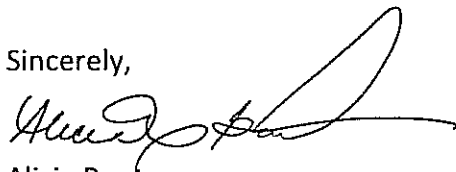
Illinois ADAP has a longstanding commitment to excellent consumer education and service. That commitment is more important now than ever as discussions begin about sustainable funding levels and possible program changes.

The Cook/Collar Consortia urges the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) to increase communication and consultation with consumers, ADAP clients, community advocates, service providers, HIV health professionals, the Consortia Directors, and other stakeholders. Based on this input, the state should make informed program changes that minimize disruptions for clients who depend on ADAP and other services. IDPH took a step in the right direction by re-convening on January 27 the ADAP Medical Issues Advisory Board.

As we champion sustainable solutions to save these programs, we need the state's assistance providing real-time, accurate information about program trends, costs, and utilization. Furthermore, we need IDPH to help advocates make the strongest case for ADAP, prevention and care as a humanitarian and cost-saving solution that yields enormous dividends in human lives and fiscal benefits for the state and its residents.

AFC looks forward to working with you over the next several months to advocate for the future of HIV care and prevention in Illinois. You can reach me at 312-922-2322.

Sincerely,



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Director of Care Programs and QI
AIDS Foundation of Chicago

cc: Gary Dunn, East Central IL HIV Care Connect
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