

# AIDS Foundation OF CHICAGO

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## Testimony to the Illinois Senate Deficit Reduction Committee Submitted by John Peller, Director of Government Relations, March 10, 2009

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony for the Deficit Reduction Committee. The AIDS Foundation of Chicago is

### **1. *What areas of the state budget are you interested in protecting and why are those areas important?***

The HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to affect tens of thousands of Illinoisans and creates urgent public health challenges across our state. Despite the nation's recession, now is not the time to let down our guard against HIV/AIDS.

**The HIV/AIDS epidemic is larger and more complex than ever.** More than 42,000 state residents are living with HIV, including an estimated 8,000 – 10,000 individuals who do not know they are HIV-positive. An estimated 3,000 new HIV infections occur in Illinois each year. African Americans account for half of all new HIV diagnoses in Illinois; Latinos account for an additional 13% of new cases of HIV. 80% of female HIV cases occur among women of color. Sustained HIV prevention and care services are especially important for low-income communities where the effects of the recession are most acute.

**Illinois is making important progress against HIV/AIDS.** Thanks to state and federal resources, Illinois has a comprehensive AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP), which provides HIV-related medications to more than 4,000 state residents who lack adequate healthcare or the means to afford lifesaving HIV medications. Strong public health leadership has allowed Illinois to achieve universal access to voluntary HIV testing for pregnant women and one of the lowest rates of mother-to-child transmission in the nation. Furthermore, proven HIV prevention has reduced injection-drug-related HIV infections by 40% from 2003-2007. Illinois invests more than \$26 million in the response to HIV/AIDS. The federal government matches the state's investment more than 3 to 1.

**Many critical challenges remain in Illinois' fight against HIV/AIDS.** Expanded HIV prevention efforts are needed to curb HIV transmission among gay men and other men who have sex with men (MSM), particularly MSM of color. 1 in 4 HIV infections occurs among women, a rate that has more than doubled in the past 10 years. Cases among teens and young adults have increased in the past 5 years; meanwhile cases among people over age 50 have also increased. Illinois must better target current HIV prevention funds to reach greater numbers of at-risk individuals, and invest in HIV prevention interventions that go beyond HIV testing. Furthermore, Illinois must do more to help individuals who know they are HIV-positive gain access to medical care to ensure they can benefit from life-saving treatments.

**CREATING HOPE THROUGH ACTION**

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**Illinois' investment of state funds for HIV prevention and care increases competitiveness for federal funding.** Illinois receives over \$100 million each year in federal HIV prevention and treatment funds (excluding Medicaid and substance abuse treatment). The state's investment of \$26 million in general revenue funds fills gaps in federal funding and allows the state to provide wrap-around HIV prevention and treatment services; provides increased flexibility to local health departments and community-based agencies providing services; and strengthens the state's ability to conduct surveillance and disease reporting activities needed to leverage increased federal funding.

**2. What revenue enhancements would you recommend be implemented to support those areas?**

The AIDS Foundation of Chicago believes that all revenue enhancements need to be thoroughly considered. However, AFC urges legislators to ensure that revenue enhancements are (1) fair to individuals at different income brackets, ensuring lower-income families shoulder less burden than higher-income families; (2) stable amid economic fluctuations; and (3) broadly diversified to minimize the impact on consumers and businesses.

**Concerns related to cost-cutting in state healthcare programs:** The AIDS Foundation of Chicago believes that managed care is not the solution to the state's budget problems. Managed care programs in Illinois have a history of saving money by denying care, not improving health by focusing on primary care and prevention. Instead, Illinois should continue to focus on improving and expanding existing cost containment initiatives. These include the primary care case management program (Illinois Health Connect), which links patients with primary care providers to ensure that one health care provider is responsible for managing an enrollee's care, and the state's disease management program (Your Healthcare Plus), which provides services to the most expensive and sick Illinois Medicaid patients to encourage primary and preventive care utilization, coordinates care among specialists, and educates patients to care for themselves.

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