

To: Members of the Human Services Committee
From: Sister Patricia McKeon, RSM
Re: Bill to Fund AIDS Housing
Date: March 5, 2007

SB 1274

Members of the Human Services Committee, please understand the urgency with which I write to you. As Executive Director of Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation, I am doing everything I can to keep 20 clients and their families from becoming homeless due to the cuts in the Ryan White Funding. **Our program consists of three sub programs:**

- **Step Down Housing** which works to reunite parents with HIV/AIDS with their children who have been in the care of the State through the provision of stable housing and support services. The program provides rental subsidies and case management services (Supportive Housing) to 9 families. **It is currently funded at \$122,729 and sustained a 57.5% cut to \$52,261. This means the program will be able to serve only 3-4 families. Therefore, 5 to 6 families that have been reunited will fall back into homelessness and separation.** These children who worry about their parents' health should not have to, once again, be separated and their lives destabilized. **The State will have to pay for their care in foster families rather than paying the rent for their intact recovering family.**
- **Scattered Site Supportive Housing** provides housing subsidies and case management services to 24 families. This program funded at \$146,716 sustained a cut of 60% bringing it to \$58,637. This means that only 9 families will be served going forward.
- **Emergency Transitional Housing** provides emergency housing for people with HIV/AIDS who are without shelter. Often they are transitioning from Corrections or institutions or are homeless with families. The housing provides time for case workers to help them find a longer term solution. The program might serve as many as 100 people in a year. **This funding was cut 95.5% from \$105,133 to \$4,795 leaving only enough for a relatively few emergency situations in a year.**

Twenty (20) families will no longer have a rental subsidy or case management services because of these funding cuts. We estimate that maybe one will be able to stay housed without additional help. That means all those families once again become homeless and, if they are unable to find shelter, lose their children. That does not even consider the fact that people with HIV/AIDS are sick. Mercy started our AIDS program in 1989, when the crisis first broke, with the creation

of Mercy House, a residence for people with the virus who were homeless and at the very least needed a PLACE to be sick.

The families and individuals in our program have been very successful managing their illness and their lives. Please help us with funds so they do not lose all they have achieved. The turnover rate for our housing has been about 2% that is an incredible achievement for people who are disabled and formerly homeless. It indicates how hard clients and staff have worked to improve their situations.

The loss of the emergency housing will make it very difficult to help those who come looking for housing and we can not even offer temporary refuge.

Clients will lose housing and we will have to lay off staff as a result of the Federal Government's action. If the State can see its way to correcting this, it would help the clients, the State and the Cities where newly homeless people will suffer as well as further stress inadequate homeless services. Thank you for your consideration.

Sister Patricia McKeon, RSM
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