



Connecticut's Statewide AIDS Coalition

**Public Testimony  
Public Health Committee  
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**Shawn M. Lang, Director of Public Policy**

Senator Harris, Representative Villano, members of the committee. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak.

I'm Shawn Lang, Director of Public Policy with the CT AIDS Resource Coalition, CT's only statewide AIDS Coalition. I also co-chair the AIDS LIFE Campaign our statewide AIDS policy group and sit on the Community Advisory board and Executive Committee of CIRA (the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on AIDS) as well as the board of the National AIDS Housing Coalition and the Convening Committee of the Federal AIDS Policy Partnership

I'm here to ask for your support for S. B. No. 1381 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING APPROPRIATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND AGRICULTURE.

Specifically, we're asking for a \$2 million increase to the SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).

SNAP funding is used for the food banks to buy protein food for pantries and shelters, food that is often not donated. This food goes a long way to increase food security for those who are very food insecure and hungry.

How this relates to people with HIV/AIDS may or may not be obvious. What we know is that Connecticut has nearly 10,000 **KNOWN** cases of HIV/AIDS. This is an extremely poor and therefore vulnerable population.

The correlation between homelessness and HIV/AIDS has been well-documented. The prevalence of **HIV/AIDS is three to nine times higher among persons who are homeless or unstably housed** compared with persons with stable and adequate housing. (*Aidala, 2005; Allen et al., 1994; Culhane et al., 2001; Fournier et al., 1996; Paris et al., 1996; Shlay et al., 1996; Torres et al., 1990; Zolapa et al., 1994*).

But even among those who may be housed, because the majority of people with HIV/AIDS live in poverty, they rely on food banks, soup kitchens and other food programs to supplement their diets, especially at or near the end of the month when their food stamps run out...if they have food stamps at all.

For people with HIV/AIDS, this request for an increase comes at a particularly critical time. Recent changes in the way that federal Ryan White dollars are coming into the state and how they can be used is about to have an extremely detrimental impact, especially in the Hartford/Tolland/Middlesex counties and the New Haven/Farfield Counties Eligible Metropolitan Areas (EMAs). Both EMAs have experienced massive cuts.

Food services under Ryan White in the Hartford EMA have been completely wiped out, and I'm waiting for information from the New Haven EMA to understand the depth of their cuts.

I know that it may sound like common sense, but good nutrition is critically important to the health of people with HIV/AIDS.

- Good nutrition helps keep a person's immune system strong, enabling them to better fight disease. A healthy diet improves quality of life.
- Weight loss, wasting, and malnutrition continue to be common problems in HIV, despite more effective antiretroviral medications, and can contribute to HIV disease progression.
- Good nutrition helps the body process the many medications taken by people with HIV.
- Diet (and exercise) can help with symptoms such as diarrhea, nausea, and fatigue, and with fat redistribution and metabolic abnormalities such as high blood sugar, cholesterol, and triglycerides.

So, we urge you to support the \$2 million increase to the SNAP program.

Thank you for your time.