



Connecticut AIDS Resource Coalition

**Testimony of Shawn M. Lang
Public Health Committee
6 March 2009**

Senator Looney, Representative Janowski, members of the committee; I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today. I'm Shawn M. Lang, the Director of Public Policy with the CT AIDS Resource Coalition, Connecticut's only statewide HIV/AIDS organization. We work to ensure that the nearly 11,000 people living with HIV/AIDS in our state have the housing, care and supportive services they need in order to live their lives in dignity.

I'm here to testify in full support of the re-nomination of Kevin Lembo, Connecticut's Health Care Advocate.

I have had the honor of working with Kevin many times during his tenure. When he first came on board, he contacted me to inform me about the work of the Office of Health Advocate, hear what CARC does and identify areas of collaboration and support.

I've been an advocate on many fronts in my 25 years in CT, most notably running a program for battered women in the early to late 1980s, to my work with CARC for the past 18 years; and over that long history I can't remember any state agency or quasi-agency who ever reached out to us first. That is, until Kevin Lembo.

I wish that I had kept a log of the number of people living with HIV/AIDS that I've referred to Kevin and his staff. People with complex medical histories who are often medically and socially fragile, and unable to navigate the complicated hoops they have to jump through for basic health care; people who are often scared, isolate and vulnerable. As one friend put it, "I know of no other disease that carries with it the same level of stigma, isolation and bureaucratic chaos."

Kevin and his staff helped to alleviate or at the very least helped to mitigate all of that and more in an understanding, supportive, knowledgeable and professional manner.

Anyone I've ever referred to the OHA has called me back to thank me for the referral. The support and assistance has been consistent over time, over complexities and people. Not once was someone turned away, put on interminable hold, put on a waiting list, or put off.

The services provided by OHA under Kevin's leadership have been invaluable and available nowhere else.

I urge you to support his nomination to allow the OHA to continue under strong and compassionate leadership, quality services and true collaboration.

Thank you.