

**Testimony of Nicole Keder  
Appropriations Committee  
20 February 2008**

First I would like to thank you for giving me your time and allowing me to testify. My name is Nicole Keder I am a student from the Uconn School of Social Work. I am currently interning for Leeway located in New Haven CT. Leeway is a skilled nursing home/rehabilitation facility for people living with HIV/AIDS. The agency works with its residents to regain their health and help them to transition back into the community. I work closely with Leeway's Alumni Society which consists of members from Leeway who have regained their health and transitioned back into the community. Together they work to be supports to one another, advocate for HIV/AIDS and find opportunities to educate themselves and others in current issues within the community.

While working with the Alumni Society I have seen first hand the importance and need for services provided by the Ryan White Foundation. The Ryan White foundation has continued to provide case management services to our members, transport them to doctor appointments, provide mental health and substance abuse treatment, provide meal and food vouchers, housing and co pays for medication. These services continue to help members maintain a healthy lifestyle, not cycle back into hospitals or return to Leeway. Most importantly the services have helped members to sustain housing which is a major barrier this community faces on a daily basis.

If the DPH (Department of Public Health) budget is cut by 2.5 million dollars the state will have to face the repercussions finically by the increase of homelessness, increase the risk of hospitalization and most importantly death. HIV/AIDS is no longer a death sentence for those living with the disease! But it can be if it is not properly treated! The Ryan White Foundation is the closest thing these individuals have as a Family support. The members of the Alumni Society don't have positive family lives like many of us are so fortunate to have. When they are not feeling good they don't have family to take care of them, when they get into finical troubles they have no family to lend them a hand, if they need a ride to an appointment many of them have no reliable transportation. The necessary tasks many of us need to survive the Ryan White Foundation make sure the necessities are taken care of.

These members are a very fragile part of our community and cannot risk losing any more services!

Ryan White has and continues to be available to help our members and many other individuals within the community in their time of need. But what happens when this funding is cut and these services are no longer available? The decision to cut funding around the state is a very difficult task to take at hand and not one anyone is taking lightly. But I ask you out of all the state agencies that are having their funding cut by ten percent why is the DPH facing an astounding forty percent cut? These are human beings with hopes and dreams that deserve to be given a chance to live! I ask you to reconsider the DPH budget cut and bring equality to this community!

Thank you for your time!