



**TESTIMONY FOR SUPPORT OF CONTINUATION OF
HIV/AIDS MEDICAID WAIVER, NEXT STEPS III FUNDING AND
HIV PREVENTION PROGRAM FUNDING**

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I am the Executive Director of **Leeway**, Connecticut's multi-service provider to persons with HIV/AIDS. We are Connecticut's first and only sub-acute facility dedicated solely to the **care of people with HIV/AIDS** and now developer and provider of supportive housing for this population. I would like to present testimony on three critical items necessary for the population we care for and house.

Because many of CT's most frail and marginalized persons living with AIDS (PLWA) are unable to sustain independence in a community setting and thanks to your work to be innovative in facilitating health policy change, legislation was passed in 2006 to obtain a Medicaid waiver. This waiver would pilot the provision of enhanced home and community-based services for **up to 100 Medicaid-eligible persons from across Connecticut who have HIV/AIDS** while avoiding unnecessary or extended stays in a nursing home. Intensive community clinical case management services are proven to reduce the overall health care costs for persons with HIV/AIDS by helping them better manage this complex, chronic disease while living at home. Additionally, these supports help clients **return to productive community living** more quickly and **free up scarce health care resources** for those waiting to be discharged from hospitals to skilled nursing facilities.

Since that time, the Department of Social Services (DSS) has nearly completed the application for this waiver and it is ready for submission to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). But as you are grappling with desperate fiscal measures to reduce state budget deficits, I strongly urge you and your fellow legislators to **fight any efforts to delay the waiver's implementation**. Its delay would have a negative impact on the **Money Follows the Person** project underway to move CT residents in skilled nursing homes back to the community. And the **savings in lives, dignity, quality of life and care dollars** we could gain with an AIDS waiver program would be lost forever.

We just celebrated **World AIDS Day 2009** and the **AIDS epidemic is still infecting and affecting** the lives of Connecticut's citizens (and those of the world) at an unabated rate. I am seeking your help to remain committed to solving a care delivery problem that continues to cost our state, its taxpayers and those with HIV/AIDS countless dollars, lost productive lives and removing any sense of hope that we, as caregivers, can give. Our

staff at Leeway lament when they have worked for months to bring a client back from the brink of death, only to have the client return to the community without supports and, in a matter of months, end up back in the ER, the ICU and once again admitted to Leeway exhausted, emaciated and discouraged.

On behalf of very low income families and people with disabilities who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, **thanks to the Appropriations Committee** for understanding the value to **human dignity of stable housing** and **restoring Next Steps funding** in the 2009 legislative session. There will be possibly four Next Steps III projects which will put people to work building and/or rehabilitating housing and provide permanent supportive housing to over 100 individuals and families. However, the Governor's deficit mitigation plan potentially could have funding lapse in FY10 and partially lapse in FY11, jeopardizing these projects once again.

Leeway has a Next Steps III program (Leeway Welton) that has scored favorably as one of the smallest, least costly project applicants and with the most highly leveraged funding from other sources. We have been invited by CHFA to reapply for funding at the reduced levels. Leeway Welton would provide supportive housing to 10 individuals who are diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, have coexisting disorders and who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Please **keep the dreams alive** for all CT individuals and families who might benefit from this wonderful program.

Lastly, I cannot but comment on Gov. Rell's deficit mitigation plan that disproportionately requires the state's **syringe exchange programs (SEP) and AIDS service budget line items to take a 25% reduction in funding** – basically stripping our state's front line defenses in prevention programming. Let me remind you that 1 million people in the US are living with HIV now and 56,000 Americans will become newly infected with HIV this year. 14,000 Americans will die from AIDS this year.

Please do not delay **submission of the AIDS waiver to CMS**. Fight for the **lives that can be saved by SEP and other prevention programs**. And hold fast to your commitment to provide **housing to very low income families and those with disabilities**. Thank you very much.

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