Testimony

Appropriations Committee

Daniel Hayes

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Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the committee. I'm Daniel Hayes. I am an intern at Connecticut AIDS Resource Coalition, and studying community organizing at UCONN School of Social Work. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you tonight. While I'm supportive of most aspects of Governor Malloy's proposed budget, I'm not quite as enthusiastic about some parts.

People living with HIV/AIDS are disproportionately affected by poverty. Approximately 40% of people living with HIV/AIDS rely on Medicaid as their primary insurer. For many, even asking for a few dollars to cover medication co-pays would be unrealistic. Our state's Department of Public Health website says that while HIV/AIDS has affected nearly every city and town in our state, the highest concentrations of people living with the virus are in Hartford, New Haven, and Bridgeport which also have the highest concentrations of poverty. Additionally, 30% of people living with HIV/AIDS in Connecticut have below poverty incomes. Other recent studies have shown the relationship between income level and risk of becoming HIV positive. I hope that you will re-consider this when finalizing the budget. The vision of Connecticut AIDS Resource Coalition is envisioning a future in which all people living with HIV/AIDS can live in dignity, and the AIDS epidemic has ended. You can help us accomplish this by making sure that people have access to their medications.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to talk to you about housing. This year we are asking for $1.5 million in AIDS housing bond funds. The purpose of these funds is to make sure that people living with HIV/AIDS have safe housing. These residences, like any homes, need roof repairs, plumbing repairs, electrical updates and safety upgrades. Research shows that when people living with HIV/AIDS have safe and healthy housing, they are more likely to adhere to their medication regimens. They are also less likely to engage in high-risk behaviors. While saving money is important in these hard times, it's also important to simply do what's right.

I hope that my testimony has helped to shed some light on how having access to medication and safe housing are both vital and interconnected for people living with HIV/AIDS. Thank you for this opportunity to speak before you. I'll be happy to answer any questions you might have.