



Connecticut AIDS Resource Coalition

**Testimony
Appropriations Committee
Shawn M. Lang
March 4 2011**

Senator Harp, Representative Walker, members of the committee. I'm Shawn Lang the Director of Public Policy with the CT AIDS Resource Coalition, the only statewide organization in Connecticut whose sole focus is the needs of people with HIV/AIDS.

We want to express our concern about the proposed cuts to the state AIDS Drug Assistance Program – CADAP. While it's a relatively small cut compared to the overall dollars that fund this program, it plays a vital role in keeping the program solvent. Currently, there is approximately \$10 million in federal funds and the pharmaceutical companies provide approximately \$11 million in rebates that go directly back into the program. In January, CADAP served nearly 2,000 unduplicated clients. And, this May, DSS will be implementing an insurance purchase and continuation component under CADAP, which will not only serve to provide an enhanced service under CADAP, but will also result in further savings. Our hope that all told, this cut will not be as harmful as we first thought.

However, there are other proposed cuts – instituting co-pays, limiting non-emergency dental services and limitations on Medicaid for LIA, will unnecessarily create additional barriers for low-income adults including people living with HIV/AIDS. When people face these types of barriers, they get sicker and end up with much higher cost illnesses, unnecessary use of emergency rooms, and hospitalizations.

Shifting to AIDS housing, we are requesting \$1.5 million in AIDS housing bond funds, which was wiped out during the last round of rescissions. Over the past 20 years, state has made a significant investment in the ten AIDS housing programs that provide either congregate living or single site apartment building. Many of these programs are barely keeping their heads above water with the wear and tear of 20 years of life and death and are badly in need of repairs or renovations to address significant safety, code and energy efficiency issues.

Housing is an evidence based HIV prevention and care strategy. Extensive research has documented that over and over again. Simply put, people who are stably housed are more likely to be in and stay in care, and less likely to engage in high risk behaviors; all of which means far fewer expensive trips to the emergency room or other institutions resulting in an overall cost savings.

I want to applaud the Governor's inclusion of the HIV/AIDS Home and Community Based Health Care Waiver. While he is proposing to reduce the number of people from 100 to 50, this waiver has languished for years, so we're thrilled it's in the budget. This waiver would save the state approximately \$6 million over two years, and \$2 million in five years.

Finally, we support the revenue enhancements proposed by the Governor and urge you to go further and support the revenue options proposed by the Better Choices for CT Coalition.

Health care cuts will only result in intensifying the significant barriers people already face. We urge you to reconsider these cuts.

Thank you.

