



Feigenholtz gets AIDS funds back in budget

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CHICAGO – More than \$2 million in HIV/AIDS funds slated to be cut by Gov. Pat Quinn (D) were put back into the budget approved by the Illinois House of Representatives May 13, largely at the behest of state Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago), who chairs the House Appropriations-Human Services Committee.

“The door will not close on anyone for AIDS treatment in Illinois,” Feigenholtz said May 21. “That is the goal.”

A primary aim of Feigenholtz has been to preserve funding for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program, a program she’s long championed that provides HIV/AIDS medications to people who would not otherwise be able to afford them. Feigenholtz and other supporters say ADAP is a net plus for the state because it enables people with HIV/AIDS to remain healthy and keep working.

But on April 15 the Illinois Department of Public Health announced that it would tighten eligibility standards for ADAP and begin turning some people away in July. Feigenholtz vowed to fight that move then and partially succeeded, she said, by getting some ADAP funding restored in the budget.

“While we restored \$2.0 million for HIV/AIDS funding to the Illinois Department of Public Health, I’m not sure that that is going to be enough do the trick,” Feigenholtz said.

The governor had originally proposed cuts of \$3.5 million in HIV/AIDS funding. But Feigenholtz said she and state officials are looking at ways to shift some of the costs borne by ADAP to other programs some ADAP clients may qualify for.

“We are working on finding alternate methods of funding through the federal government,” Feigenholtz said.

In recent years Illinois has more fully funded ADAP, which is partially funded by federal funds, than many states and has avoided having a waiting list for the program, as is the practice in some states. But Feigenholtz said that could change unless alternatives are found.

“Because of budget cuts elsewhere, we could very well go to a waiting list in the state of Illinois,” she said.

Advocates praised Feigenholtz for her work on the problem.

“We thank Rep. Feigenholtz for recognizing the life-saving and cost-saving benefits of HIV services,” said AIDS Foundation of Chicago Vice President of Policy John Peller. “Every HIV infection prevented saves \$300,000 in lifetime medical costs.”

The budgets passed by the House and Senate differ and must be reconciled before being sent to Quinn’s desk, but Feigenholtz said she’ll continue working to make sure the \$2 million in HIV/AIDS funds restored in the House budget is included in the final budget bill.