

Feigenholtz hails legislators' budget effort

Written by Gary Barlow

CHICAGO – Ill. state Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago) said the budget passed by the Illinois Legislature as the spring legislative session ended May 31 makes tough cuts necessitated by the state's financial condition but protects essential health services.

"It was important to me that direct services were protected as much as possible," Feigenholtz said. "We started by cutting administration, travel expenses and communications – the things that every family in Illinois is cutting. We did our best to make the remaining cuts as minimal and as across-the-board as possible to prevent worthy programs from being eliminated."

Feigenholtz, who chairs the House Human Services Appropriations Committee, worked especially hard to ensure that people on the AIDS Drug Assistance Program continue to receive vital HIV medications. Although the Quinn administration announced earlier this year that it would restrict access to the program by tightening income requirements, Feigenholtz restored some funding for ADAP and also worked to make some people served by ADAP eligible for other federal programs. She also ensured that if people are turned away by ADAP, they'll be able to sign up and be put on a waiting list, which could make it easier to find other assistance for them.

"We had to be careful to avoid cutting services that would result in higher actual costs in the long-run," Feigenholtz said. "Slashing funding for substance abuse treatment and ADAP does not make any sense. If we take those services away, the state ends up paying 10 times more through emergency room visits. We took a results-driven budgeting approach in order to invest taxpayer dollars wisely."