

Illinois HIV Funding: Advocates Protest Lawmakers' 'Gutting' Of State Programs

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Funding cuts to community-based HIV prevention, harm-reduction and housing programs approved last month by Illinois state lawmakers have "set back the progress against AIDS by a decade" in the state, according to some health advocates.

The state's new budget, effective July 1, [cut funding for HIV/AIDS programs statewide by 42 percent](#), according to Medill Reports. The cuts total \$3.3 million of the state's \$29.6 billion state budget.

In a statement issued earlier this month, AIDS Foundation of Chicago president and CEO David Ernesto Munar said the cuts will lead to new HIV infections in the state and, as a result, lead to an increase in lifetime medical costs for newly infected individuals that could ultimately place a larger financial burden on the state.

"[Just when we are starting to see new HIV cases decline, Illinois has turned its back on people with HIV and people at risk of HIV](#)," Munar said. "HIV funding cuts are a bad deal for the taxpayers of Illinois and a tragedy for people who will have to live with a still-deadly infectious disease that could have been prevented."

The funding cuts were slightly less dramatic than the \$4 million originally proposed by Democratic Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn. State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago) successfully led an effort to restore \$623,000 worth of cuts to the programs.

The state legislature's Black Caucus also pushed back against both cuts to the HIV cuts. The Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus' chair Keith Green [applauded their efforts](#).

"Experts in infectious disease tell us that regular HIV testing, linkage and retention to care and adherence to medications among HIV-positive people are all elements needed to stop the epidemic," Green said, according to the *Windy City Times*.

The cuts to state HIV programming are accompanied by [\\$1.6 billion worth of cuts, signed into law last week by Gov. Quinn, to the state's Medicaid program](#). Opponents of the governor's plan criticize the cuts as endangering the poorest and neediest of the state's

residents, while Quinn described his action as one that preserved our health care program that millions of our most vulnerable rely upon."

Quinn introduced the Medicaid and HIV program funding cuts earlier this year as part of a budget proposal intended to contend with **the state's record-setting \$13 billion deficit.**