

WINDY CITY TIMES

THE VOICE OF CHICAGO'S GAY, LESBIAN, BI AND TRANS COMMUNITY SINCE 1985

AUG. 25, 2010 • VOL 25 NO 47

www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com

Illinois House reinstates \$3.5 million in AIDS funding

From an AFC press release

2013-05-28

SPRINGFIELD — In a major victory for AIDS advocates on Memorial Day, the Illinois House released a final state budget for fiscal year 2014, reversing nearly all of Governor Pat Quinn's proposed \$4.27 million cuts from HIV services.

"It is unprecedented for the General Assembly to reverse an HIV funding cut of this magnitude," said Ramon Gardenhire, Director of Government Relations for the AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC). "In particular, we thank House Human Services Appropriations Committee Chair Greg Harris (D-Chicago) for his tireless work to put HIV funding back in the budget."

Under Governor Quinn's proposed budget released in March, total state HIV spending would have dropped from \$26.23 million in FY13 to \$21.75 million in FY14. This week's action by the House will restore \$3.25 million of the proposed cut, allocating \$25 million to HIV services.

Yesterday, the House also passed SB 26, sponsored by State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago) and Sen. Heather Steans (D-Chicago), which would authorize Illinois to take advantage of the Affordable Care Act by providing Medicaid to about 342,000 low-income Illinois citizens who are currently uninsured. The bill would also cover thousands of Illinoisans who are living with HIV/AIDS and now rely on the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) for life-saving HIV medications.

"Thanks to President Obama, many people with HIV will gain new health insurance coverage through the ACA, including an expanded Medicaid program made possible by SB 26," continued Gardenhire. "The ACA will provide partial relief to ADAP, but we are concerned it will take longer than expected for people with HIV to transition to new coverage. Thanks to this state funding restoration, we are confident that ADAP will have adequate support to ensure that people can switch to new programs without interrupting their health care services."

"We are grateful for the leadership of State Sen. Heather Steans (D-Chicago), who heads the Senate Appropriations Committee," said Gardenhire. "In addition, State Reps. Lisa Hernandez (D-Cicero), Thaddeus Jones (D-Calumet City), Camille Lilly (D-Chicago), and Rita Mayfield (D-Waukegan) were instrumental in protecting HIV funding."

"This year's success would not have been possible without over 150 advocates who traveled to Springfield on five different days to fight for HIV funding," said Lucy Baglin, AFC's Policy Coordinator. She organized these trips in an event known as Lobby Days. "These advocates have the courage to stand up publicly and tell their legislators what it means to live with HIV in communities large and small across Illinois. They speak truth to power and bring it home to legislators."

For the first time in many years, House and Senate Democrats worked together to assemble the final budget. As a result, the Senate is widely expected to pass the budget by the May 31 deadline. It must then be signed into law by Governor Quinn.

For more information on the state budget, visit www.aidschicago.org/hivbudgetcentral.