



City Council General Welfare Committee
Preliminary Budget Hearing
Monday, March 23, 2009

Soraya Elcock, Co-Chair
HIV Health and Human Services Planning Council

My name is Soraya Elcock, VP for Policy and Government Affairs at Harlem United. I am also community co-chair of the Ryan White HIV Health and Human Services Planning Council of New York. The Planning Council is charged with developing spending priorities and allocating over \$100 million in federal Ryan White Part A funds based on the needs of the ever-changing HIV/AIDS epidemic. The 50 member Council is a coalition of persons living with HIV/AIDS, care givers, governmental representatives, and community members. The vision of the Planning Council is that people living with HIV disease in the New York Eligible Metropolitan Area (EMA) will have access to appropriate, quality services across the continuum of care, resulting in the best possible health and quality of life.

As the HIV Planning Council is responsible for identifying gaps in services and responding to the ever changing needs of people living with HIV/AIDS, I come here on behalf of the Council to speak to you about the impact that proposed cuts in the Mayor's budget, as reflected in the January Plan, will have on services in our community. On areas of the budget that the General Welfare committee has jurisdiction, there are three major areas of the Mayor's proposed budget that we have major concerns with:

(1) Elimination of HASA Scattered Site II Program (\$4,020,000 cut)

As of January 2009, there were 567 HASA clients in scattered site II. Scattered Site II allows the client to keep the lease of their apartment in their own name, while supportive housing programs provide them with needed case management and other supportive services to keep them stabilized and housed. With the proposed elimination of scattered site II, many of these clients will lose their connection to supportive services and inevitably wind up homeless. Considering the tremendous costs to the city for each eviction and emergency housing placement, this proposal is pound-wise and penny foolish, saving money in the very short run only to see costs quickly rise as clients wind up in far more expensive commercial SRO housing.

(2) Reduction in HIV/AIDS case management staff at supportive housing programs
(\$1,876,000 cut)

The City is proposing to essentially eliminate the “supportive” in supportive housing with HASA contracted supportive housing programs. Falsely, the City is claiming that HASA case management staff can absorb the responsibilities of case management that have, until, now been done by supportive housing programs. While the services of City employees at HASA are essential, make no mistake about it – the “case management” staff at HASA are ill equipped nor adequately trained to handle the complex psycho-social case management that is performed at supportive housing programs. The phrase “case management” is identical in name only, but in reality the functions of HASA staff and supportive housing staff are very, very different.

(3) 50% reduction in HASA funded HIV nutrition programs (\$491,000 cut)

All over the City, soup kitchens and other programs providing food and pantry bags have been experiencing a surge in demand as the economy has worsened. Tragically, the Mayor’s January Plan proposes a 50% reduction in the HRA HIV Nutrition contract, a devastating cut of \$491,000 a year. HIV nutrition programs are a basic safety net program, reaching clients often when they are in desperate need not only of a hot meal, but help to stabilize them and get them into care and connect them with supportive services and medical care. HIV nutrition programs also identify early the on-set of medical problems and get the clients connected to services. It would be a tragedy to let this program die because of City neglect.

In closing, thousands of persons living with HIV/AIDS rely on these essential services, and they are the lifeline for many persons to keep them housed and fed. The HIV Planning Council urges you in the strongest possible terms to reject these proposals in the Mayor’s budget and ensuring continued funding for these critical services.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

For more information, contact:

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