

**Submission to the NYSDOB Hearing
Saturday November 17, 2007**

**Christopher Voltz, Director of Marketing and Special Projects
AIDS Community Services of WNY, Inc.**

Thank you all for hosting this event and allowing the citizens of WNY an opportunity to participate in this important process. I am Christopher Voltz, Director of Marketing and Special Projects at AIDS Community Services of WNY, Inc. We are the largest and most comprehensive community based provider of HIV/AIDS prevention and care services in WNY and one of the most comprehensive providers in the nation.

While we believe that NYS has the one of strongest HIV/AIDS funding infrastructures in the nation, there is still significant need. Buffalo, NY is the 2nd poorest city in the nation, has the 4th highest teen pregnancy rate in the nation and is the 8th most segregated city in the nation. These are significant barriers for all healthcare providers, especially those in the HIV/AIDS arena.

Two inherent challenges we would like to see addressed are:

First, of the total state expenditures around HIV, the largest by far - at 69% - is the cost of medical care. Of that, the highest percentage by far, is the cost of hospitalization and emergency room utilization.

Significant research demonstrates that individuals and families receiving comprehensive care including primary medical care, care management and supportive services are far less likely to require or request hospitalization. The cost savings are enormous - **Hospital stays and emergency room utilization drop by 50%.**

However, that being said, our primary NYS funding source, Medicaid reimbursements for medical care and our comprehensive or COBRA case management have not increased in **TEN** years. With double digit increases in health insurance annually and rising costs of living for our staff, we cannot continue to provide these necessary high quality services at the necessary pace. We cannot even afford to hire enough qualified staff. These minor savings cost the state heavily in emergency care and hospital stays.

Further HIV specialized primary medical care is highly, highly specialized and far more time intensive and expensive - to us the provider - than any other primary medical care. Our clients and patients are now needing care for ten, twenty, and more years. As the percentage of our folks deeply impoverished continues to grow, the intensity and complexity of their needs increase exponentially year to year, both in case management and medical care. **We desperately need reimbursement rate hikes.**

In a conversation with Dr. Daines at the Commissioners' listening tour he stated that the AIDS Institute model of disease and health disparity management is the most effective and cost effective in the state and needs to be replicated in other disease modalities. One quick way to expand this will be for the state to re-open the process for Mental Health and Substance abuse licensing. Providers of this COBRA case management model should be allowed to be licensed to expand this highly effective model to persons with SA and Mental health challenges as well as HIV.

Secondly, as of 2003, Only 4% of the states HIV allocation goes to testing and prevention this must be increased. HIV/AIDS is one of the few 100% preventable diseases known. This should be an easy answer. Give us the ability to expand our testing and prevention education.

Thank You again for your time.