250 ‘Die’ at Illinois Statehouse to Protest Proposed Cuts to AIDS Services

February 26, 2016

When Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner presented a proposed budget that cut $2 million from HIV funding, the move was met with a die-in of 250 people in the halls of the statehouse.

The proposed fiscal year budget for 2017 also represents an $8 million, or 28 percent, cut from the 2015 budget, according to a press release from the AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC), which organized the February 17 protest.

The press release denounced another aspect of the potential budgetary damage:

> Governor Rauner also proposed allocating just $500,000 to the African American HIV/AIDS Response Act (AAARA), a 60 percent cut from the proposed FY 16 amount. The AAARA remains unfunded by the state after the governor vetoed a FY 16 budget passed by the General Assembly that would have provided $1.25 million for this vital program. At a time when nearly 50 percent of new HIV infections are within the black community, AAARA is a critical tool to ensure funds go to targeted organizations working in the hardest-hit communities by the epidemic, such as the black community.

The state’s HIV funding provides prevention, housing and support services for many of the 43,500 people living with the virus in Illinois.

“We will vigorously work with the General Assembly, people living with HIV, service providers and community members to restore funding for these and other vital programs,” said Ramon Gardenhire, AFC’s vice president of policy and advocacy, in the press release.

“The responsible solution to the state’s budget fiasco is to generate the revenue needed to put Illinois on a path to sustainable prosperity,” added John Peller, AFC’s president and CEO. “We know there are many options for the state to generate adequate revenue. To say that there is ‘no choice but to make cuts’ is cynical and false.”

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