You Betcha

Illinois gambles on two new prevention bills

May 1, 2007 By Josh Sparber

Illinois' deep winter freeze didn't stop state legislators from sprouting new HIV-prevention measures. In January, State Representative Mary Flowers (D) introduced a bill that would add HIV testing to the mandatory physical exam for students entering kindergarten, as well as fifth and ninth grades. Then Representative Karen Yarbrough (D) proposed giving proceeds from a state lottery game to HIV ed. At press time, both bills were still in legislative committee hearings.

Some critics say Flowers' law would prove costly, up to $95 per child, and reach few at-risk kids who would not otherwise have been tested by their docs. What's more, Illinois passed a law last year requiring that all newborns get tested for HIV—meaning that by 2012, all first-graders will already have been tested. Also, because the tests stop at ninth grade—around age 14 or 15—they miss the high school period, when most underage high-risk sex and drug use occurs. Flowers counters, "How much is a person's life worth?"

Yarbrough's lottery bucks would boost education outreach by community-based agencies that often lose out to larger orgs when competing for funds. "I'm not a proponent of gambling," Yarbrough says, "but we need to do more in terms of outreach." As with the lotto, you've got to play to win.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/You-Betcha-11673-8618