Activists: NYC’s Proposed Budget Would Cut HIV, Housing Services

January 29, 2010

AIDS activists are criticizing New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg for releasing a fiscal year 2011 (FY11) budget proposal that cuts services for low-income, HIV-positive New Yorkers.

Under Bloomberg’s proposed FY11 budget, 248 caseworker positions at the HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) would be eliminated as the result of a nearly $4.2 million cut next year and more than $8 million in recurring cuts over the next few years. In addition, a supplemental budget based on estimated state budget reductions proposes a recurring cut of almost $8 million for supportive housing programs.

“HASA caseworkers play an important role in helping low-income people with HIV/AIDS obtain critical public benefits, including food stamps, housing and disability income,” said Sean Barry, director of the New York City AIDS Housing Network (NYCAHN). “Cutting the number of HASA caseworkers will make it harder for these New Yorkers to access support during a particularly difficult time.”

The law that established HASA (Local Law 49 of 1997) mandates a ratio of one caseworker per 34 clients and one per 25 family caseloads. Activists say cutting caseworker positions is in violation of that law.

Roughly 45,000 low-income HIV-positive people and their families receive services through HASA, and more than 4,000 live in supportive housing.

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