



May 16, 2008

Senator Thomas Duane
808 Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Senator Duane:

On behalf of the HIV Health & Human Services Planning Council of New York, I write to express support for S2890 currently pending in the State Legislature. Your bill would standardize New York City HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) benefit calculations to be consistent with federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) policy specifying that clients pay 30% of their income toward rent.

Currently, a significant number of clients who receive HASA benefits also receive other forms of public assistance, including SSI, SSDI, or veterans' benefits. Regardless of the amount clients receive, they are forced to pay all but \$330 of their monthly income toward their rent. This legislation would put a cap on the share of rent paid by people living with HIV/AIDS at 30%. Furthermore, the \$330 that HASA clients are being forced to live on has remained the same for over two decades. The cost of living in New York City has increased dramatically since 1986, but HASA benefits have not kept pace. According to the Consumer Price Index, \$330 in 1986 would be the equivalent of nearly \$600 today, an increase of over 75%. HASA benefits have been flat funded for far too long. Your legislation would clearly affect the way HASA clients are able to adhere to necessary treatments, provide for their nutritional needs, and avoid behavior that would put them at greater health risk.

The HIV Health and Human Services Planning Council of New York is comprised of service providers, physicians, advocates, and consumers, all of whom are well versed in the HIV/AIDS epidemic and recognize the tremendous strain placed on consumers who are left with \$11 per day on which to live after paying their rent. The Planning Council, accordingly, urges passage of this legislation so that New Yorkers living with HIV/AIDS can have a fair allocation of their benefits.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Soraya Elcock
Community Co-Chair