



Governor Christie's Budget Deadly for AIDS Patients

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Hyacinth AIDS Foundation

PRESS RELEASE

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New Brunswick, NJ

The new state budget signed by Governor Christie on June 29 results in the loss of access to HIV drugs for 957 individuals in New Jersey, effective August 1, 2010.

Despite the recommendations of AIDS activists and organizations such as Hyacinth AIDS Foundation, the Christie administration increased the income threshold for people living with HIV/AIDS from 500% to 300% of the federal poverty level, effectively disallowing access to life saving drugs for 957 people, including 600 individuals, 200 couples and 157 families. Since the State appropriations for the AIDS Drug Distribution Program ***increased*** by \$7.5 million there is absolutely no need to change eligibility.

"This is devastating news to those struggling to manage their HIV disease," said Kathy Ahearn-O'Brien, Hyacinth's Executive Director. "Without these medications the patient's health begins to decline rapidly, leading to serious illness or even death. This proposed change to the AIDS Drug Distribution Program is unconscionable, especially now when so many of our clients cannot pay for housing, food and other necessities, much less for these very expensive drugs."

"As a public health strategy it is incumbent upon the New Jersey State Department of Health and Human Services to ensure full access to these life saving medications. Clients who take their HIV medications experience drastic reductions in viral loads and reduce the risk to transmit the virus," Ms. O'Brien stated.

Hyacinth AIDS Foundation is New Jersey's first and largest AIDS service organization with six offices located throughout the State, serving over 15,000 people annually with direct care, treatment education and prevention. Hyacinth is the only organization in New Jersey with a dedicated public policy and community organizing staff dedicated to protect the rights and benefits of people living with HIV/AIDS in New Jersey.