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## Texas considers cuts to HIV drug program

by Alex Sanz / 11 News

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HOUSTON -- As many as 15,000 people with HIV and AIDS in Texas could be left without life-sustaining medicine if state lawmakers cut the Texas HIV Medication Program as part of an ongoing effort to close the state's multi-billion dollar budget shortfall.

"If I had to pay [for the medicines] out of my pocket it would be \$4,500 per month," said Brian Keever, a Houston resident who has lived with HIV since 1986.

Health care providers in Houston said the proposed cuts were a matter of life or death.

State lawmakers, they said, could partially fund the program, change eligibility requirements or limit the number of people allowed to be a part of it.

"[You would have] 12,000 people [who] would have to find another way to get their medications," said Randall Ellis, senior director of government relations for Legacy Community Health Services.

Texas lawmakers are not the only ones faced with the decision.

Lawmakers in Illinois have considered similar cuts.

South Carolina lawmakers have already made them.

"I cannot afford to live without the medications that I take every single day just to keep me alive," said Brian Keever.

As many as 5,000 people in and around Houston could be impacted by the proposed cuts.

About 60,000 people in Texas have HIV.

Another 30,000 have AIDS.