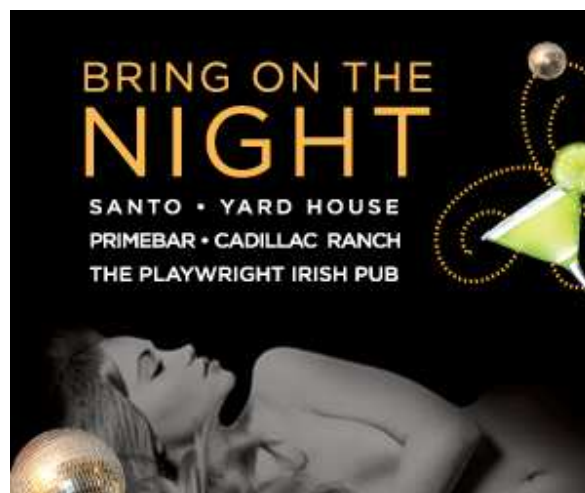




## Florida Avoids HIV Medication Crisis: Welvista Agrees to Provide Free Drugs Until April 1

By Michael Miller

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Roughly a week before Florida was set to exhaust all funding for its life-saving AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP), non-profit pharmacy Welvista has agreed to help the cash-strapped state by providing poor Floridians with free anti-retroviral medications.

As we wrote last week, the [funding snafu](#) threatened to disrupt treatment for over 10,000 state residents who can't afford HIV medications. Now approximately 6,500 ADAP recipients will be covered until state funds kick in on April 1. But activists who helped negotiate the deal warn that it's a temporary fix.

"None of us are happy with the Florida fiasco," said Lynda Dee, a spokesperson for the Fair Pricing Coalition, which helped broker the deal.

In fact, the donated meds just reduce the number for other HIV patients, such as those already [stuck on an ADAP waiting list](#), she said in a statement issued Tuesday afternoon. The real answer, Dee argued, was more funding for the drug program.

"We clearly recognize this is a one-time, emergency rescue of a program that cannot be repeated or duplicated by Florida or any other state," she said. "We therefore implore the federal government and all state governments, especially Florida, to provide adequate funding to state ADAPs to meet the medication needs of its uninsured people living with HIV."

Similar programs around the country have been hit by rising drug prices, stagnant federal funds, cuts

in state budgets, and -- on a more positive note -- the fact that HIV patients are now living longer than in the past, adding to medical costs.

But the Sunshine State's potentially deadly drug funding problem is of its own making, activist Michael Rajner told *Riptide* last week. Florida's ADAP is \$14 million in the hole largely because the state has underfunded and mismanaged the program, he said.

"Most states contribute 20 percent of state dollars towards their state program," he argued. "Florida is at 9 percent."

"Our state doesn't really want to deal with this issue."

One sign of that mismanagement is the fact that of the roughly 6,000 people on ADAP wait-lists around the country, more than half are located in Florida.

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Great, so now the state is relying on donations to meet its need. Thank you republican governors for your immense fiscal responsibility.... You were so responsible we now need handouts and welfare for our government.