



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shirley L. Huntley

Protecting New Yorkers Living with HIV or AIDS

SHIRLEY L. HUNTLEY May 6, 2010

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**News From
New York State
Senator Shirley L. Huntley**

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Contact: Bryant G. Gaspard | gaspard@senate.state.ny.us | 518-455-3531

**Senator Shirley L. Huntley Fights to Protect
New Yorkers Living with HIV or AIDS
Limits the percentage of household income towards shelter costs to 30-percent**

Senator Shirley L. Huntley (D-Jamaica) announced that the New York State Senate has passed legislation (S. 2664) that safeguards poor New Yorkers living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) by limiting the total amount of their household income being spent on housing to 30-percent. This amendment to the social services law will pertain to people diagnosed with HIV or AIDS who live in emergency shelter facilities or living in housing which receives financial aid.

“Currently, people suffering from the debilitating and terminal illnesses, AIDS and HIV are often forced to live well beyond the poverty level and are overburdened by the amount of their income needed just for housing,” Senator Huntley said. “People living with these

illnesses often have high medical bills and this legislation would allow them to allocate more money towards these medical expenses by relieving some of the financial pressure they currently face due to high housing costs.”

According to CBS News, during the early phases of the treatment, the average monthly cost is about \$2,100. Then, when the disease progress, the cost of the treatment increases to about \$4,700 per month. The cost of drugs is nearly three-fourths of the lifetime expense, leaving only one –fourth of the lifetime expense to be allocated to everyday necessities, such as housing, clothes, and food.

There is a lifetime expense associated with being HIV positive. This is because there is no cure for the virus. The only thing that can be done is preventing it from progressing into AIDS. The way this virus functions is that it weakens one’s immune system by destroying helper T cells which the body utilizes as form of defense system against infections, viruses and other pathogens. As a result, the body’s immune system is weak and susceptible to opportunistic infections. Some common opportunist infections or infections that take advantage of a weaken immune system are: Human Papiloma Virus, Hepatitis, Pneumonia, Tuberculosis, and many more.

HIV and AIDS cannot be transmitted through simply touching an infected person or being around them. It is not transmittable by air, water or food. It is transmittable by direct blood to blood contact or if semen and vaginal secretions as well as breast milk, were able to get into the bloodstream through a break in the skin or through mucous linings, such as the eyes, mouth, nose, vagina, rectum or penis.

According to New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene,

- 1 in 40 African Americans.

- 1 in 25 men living in Manhattan.
- 1 in 12 black men age 40-49 years.
- 1 in 10 men who have sex with men.
- 1 in 8 injection drug users.
- 1 in 5 black men age 40-49 in Manhattan.
- 1 in 4 men who have sex with men in Chelsea.

The statistics show that our communities are also affected as a result of HIV and AIDS. There is a strong need for awareness of this dangerous and lifelong disease. There is a need not only for awareness, but for action in order to offer support to those infected. The passage of this bill is a form of support and protection for those individuals who have to struggle every day. This bill will at least relieve one of their financial burdens.

“Those with HIV or AIDS need to focus their time and money primarily on daily survival needs as well as getting and staying well,” Senator Huntley said. “This legislation would ensure that these in-need citizens would be more able to receive medical treatments as well as maintain a proper living situation.”

The Senate’s bill passed 42-19.