



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas K. Duane

## Addressing the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies' AIDS Leadership Coalition

THOMAS K. DUANE January 20, 2012

Because of my history of advocacy and leadership in the New York State Senate on HIV/AIDS issues, the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies' AIDS Leadership Coalition invited me to address its first meeting of the year. I was honored to speak to this advisory group, composed of leaders of some of New York City's most esteemed HIV/AIDS advocacy organizations and service providers, who work to identify and shape humane and just public health policies for New York communities affected by HIV and AIDS.

The Coalition was particularly interested in my reaction to Governor Cuomo's Fiscal Year 2012-13 Executive Budget. I noted that the Executive Budget proposes to close the State's \$1.9 billion budget gap with no new taxes, fees and includes zero growth in State agency spending. While it is essential that New York State be fiscally responsible during these tough times, I will continue the fight to protect essential programs and services that are vital to our community, some of which have already been cut too far. Toward that end, I will join many of my colleagues in fighting to extend the millionaires' tax.

The New York State AIDS Institute's proposed funding is essentially flat, which is relatively good news. Nonetheless, there are specific HIV/AIDS budget priorities on which I am focused. I, along with many others, will continue advocating, and I believe we will be

successful in reinstating Medicaid coverage of enteral nutrition support products for people with HIV/AIDS who are actively losing weight. This was eliminated last year as part of the Medicaid redesign program. Because I have made the case, along with many advocates, that this cut disproportionately hurts the most vulnerable New Yorkers and will also fail to provide the intended cost savings, I am extremely optimistic that this coverage will be restored.

I am particularly concerned about the dramatic decline in State funding for Runaway and Homeless Youth programs in recent years, from \$2 million in 2008 to \$744,379 last year. The allocation remains flat in the FY 2012-13 Executive Budget and it is simply not sufficient to meet demand. Young people living on the streets are particularly susceptible to HIV infection and other tragic situations, and we must do more to provide them shelter and a gateway to services.

I will also continue to advocate for new funding for training in HIV prevention and treatment for older adults, who are becoming infected with HIV at alarming rates; to facilitate New York State Department of Health oversight of HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C prevention and treatment in prisons and jails; and to provide HIV Legal Services, among other priorities, although these will be challenging.

I applauded the members of the AIDS Leadership Coalition for their work and urged them to come to the Albany to lobby for their funding and policy priorities even more this year than they have in the past. I urge all of my constituents to do the same.