



The National AIDS Housing Coalition

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For immediate release

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Flat funding of \$300 million proposed for HOPWA in FY2009

Washington, D.C. February 5, 2008 -- The Administration's FY 2009 budget announced yesterday proposed flat funding of \$300.1 million for the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS program (HOPWA) for the upcoming fiscal year. This proposed funding level, which according to the budget, will provide housing for 70,500 persons with HIV/AIDS and their families, comes at a time when the community of AIDS service organizations anticipate the announcement of a significant increase in the estimated number of new HIV infections annually – as many as 60,000 cases, up significantly over the long-time new infection rate of 40,000 cases. Last year's HOPWA increase of \$14 million, while falling far short of need, demonstrated an appreciation by the Administration of the role stable housing plays in better health outcomes for the thousands of people living with the debilitating and impoverishing effects of HIV/AIDS.

Unfortunately, once again, flat funding essentially means a cut with at least three new jurisdictions coming online in 2009. By no means does flat funding of HOPWA come close to a level that is realistic in terms of meeting the need. Many communities across the country face long or closed HOPWA waiting lists and housing in America is less affordable than ever. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition's study *Out of Reach 2008*, a U.S. worker must make \$17.31 per hour to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment for his or her family. This alone makes housing largely unattainable for minimum wage workers and even more inaccessible for the most vulnerable, including people with HIV/AIDS, often subsisting on Social Security Disability Income. HOPWA takes on added importance as other options, such as emergency and transitional housing under the Ryan White Treatment Modernization Act, shrink or disappear.

"HOPWA is central to the continuum of housing and services critical to enabling people with HIV/AIDS to access and adhere to care and treatment and the program's role in ending homelessness cannot be underestimated", said NAHC Executive Director, Nancy Bernstine. "In these challenging economic times, proposed cuts to other important housing programs that serve people with HIV/AIDS must not be allowed to stand. The range of low income housing programs relied on by people with HIV/AIDS, including Homeless Assistance Grants, Housing Choice Vouchers and Section 811 Housing for People with Disabilities must be adequately funded."

"This proposed budget once again has people with HIV/AIDS losing ground in the battle to access and maintain housing, said NAHC Board President Shawn M. Lang, Director of Public Policy with the CT AIDS Resource Coalition. "Lack of stable, affordable housing has a detrimental impact on the health of people living with HIV/AIDS; which further strains an already overburdened health care system."

NAHC recommends a FY09 funding level of \$470 million for the HOPWA program.

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The National AIDS Housing Coalition is a national non-profit housing organization that works to advance the creation, development, management and growth of housing for persons living with HIV/AIDS in our communities.