

Co-chairs  
Health & Human Services Conference Committee  
State Capitol  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Re: Restrictions on HIV Prevention Services and Funding

Dear Members of the Health and Human Services Conference Committee:

We oppose provisions in the House version of the HHS budget bill that would place restrictions on the content of HIV prevention services funded through the Minnesota Department of Health, and would eliminate Minnesota AIDS Project's eligibility for MDH funding.

***Restrictions on Content***

HIV is primarily a sexually transmitted infection. Effective HIV prevention education requires addressing sexual behaviors in a manner that is age-appropriate, culturally appropriate, and includes information that is relevant to reducing or eliminating HIV risk. Sometimes the information needs to be explicit. To ensure that state funds are used in a way that is supportable by public health standards, all materials used in MDH-funded HIV prevention programs are subject to the MDH-administered materials review process.

To be effective in our work, we need to be able to talk about sexual practices. And sometimes, we need to have the freedom to use our private funds in ways that may not meet the political test of public funding, but nevertheless enables us to be effective in our efforts to stop HIV.

We oppose content restriction proposed in the House version of the HHS budget bill, particularly the ambiguous and undefined standards prohibiting "sexually explicit images or language."

***Elimination of MDH Funding for Minnesota AIDS Project***

MAP provides many valuable HIV prevention services. They exist as a complement to what each of our organization's do to help stop HIV infections in Minnesota. We believe that at the core, the proposal to eliminate MAP's funding is yet another attack on Minnesota's gay and bisexual citizens; actions that exacerbate our challenges to stopping HIV infections among men who have sex with men. The fact this proposal is based upon how MAP used its *private* funding, is of concern to each of our organizations.

We ask that you reject the provisions in the House HHS bill. They are not supportable by sound public health research and practice. And, of great concern to all of us, they do more harm than good to advance our collective goal of ending the HIV epidemic.

Sincerely,