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**Long Island HIV/AIDS Organizations Blast State Budget Cuts  
To HIV/AIDS Services**

*First time in New York's history that the state has cut funding for vital HIV/AIDS services.*

Hauppauge, NY. Learning that NYS Governor David Patterson and legislative leaders have agreed to a budget package that includes a 2% reduction in NYS Department of Health-funded programs, the Long Island Association for AIDS Care (LIAAC) and the Economic Opportunity Council of Suffolk (EOC) today called for immediate restorations to protect frontline HIV/AIDS care and prevention programs. Ironically, the three-way budget deal includes a 1.7% increase in funding for state operations in the Department of Health's AIDS Institute.

"At a time when HIV infection and Hepatitis-C rates continue to rise, this unprecedented reduction in funding for vital community-based programs is unacceptable," said LIAAC President/CEO Dr. Gail Barouh. "We believe that public health programs should be held harmless. If, however, the state's fiscal dilemma makes funding reductions absolutely unavoidable, then such cuts are better made by reducing bureaucracy within state government and cutting the 1.7% increase for state operations for HIV/AIDS services, rather than eliminating direct services in places like Hempstead, Freeport, Roosevelt, Bay Shore, Brentwood, Patchogue and Riverhead," she added.

EOC CEO Adrian Fassett stated, "People with HIV/AIDS are living longer and require more services than ever before. Community-based organizations like ours are struggling to meet their needs. These cuts compound federal funding reductions on Long Island and will further erode the safety net for people living with, and at risk for HIV infection in our region - especially minorities and women."

LIAAC is Long Island's oldest and largest HIV/AIDS service organization providing direct services to people living with HIV/AIDS and their families. LIAAC also conducts a wide variety of HIV prevention programs, including evidence-based interventions and HIV counseling, testing and referrals. EOC of Suffolk, the region's largest and oldest minority service agency, provides a variety of services to Long Islanders with HIV/AIDS including case management and transportation.

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