

FRANNIE PEABODY CENTER

Comprehensive HIV & AIDS Services

July 15, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Caitlin Eldridge and I am the Director of Operations at Frannie Peabody Center in Portland, Maine. Frannie Peabody Center is Maine's oldest and largest HIV/AIDS service organization. We assist people with linkage to medical care and enrollment in health insurance. I am writing on behalf of our 52 clients who are members of Community Health Options.

HIV/AIDS is a serious illness that can be managed with consistent access to care, insurance coverage, and social support. Many of our clients do not qualify for Medicaid due to their immigration status, and hospital-based free care does not always provide the necessary coverage. In an effort to address this coverage gap, the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention pays for insurance premiums for many of our clients through the Ryan White Part B AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP). This service allows our clients to access consistent medical care and life-saving medications.

Our concern is that the proposed rate increases for CHO premiums would put undue pressure on the ADAP and create an unsustainable situation for our clients, many of whom have not yet been authorized to work and do not have any income to afford their own premiums. State and federal funding for HIV/AIDS services is very limited, and if the ADAP is unable to absorb the rate increases, we worry that clients may lose their health insurance coverage.

Loss of insurance coverage for people living with HIV/AIDS could result in decreased access to regular care, problems with access to medication and adherence to treatment protocol, and an increase in the overall number of people in the community with high viral loads. This represents a broader public health concern in addition to the impact that it could have on the individual health of our clients.

We understand that difficult decisions must be made in order to maintain the stability of the health plan, but we urge you to consider the impact that a significant premium rate increase could have on some of our community members who are living with HIV/AIDS.

Please do not hesitate to contact me directly should you have any questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,

Caitlin Eldridge, MSW
Director of Operations

