

HIV AIDS ADMIN BUDGET HEARING TESTIMONY 4/26/2007 Testimony of Alis Marachelian, MPH before the Committee on Health

Mary's Center is an exponentially growing federally qualified health center. Today, the Center serves a multicultural population whose mission is to build better futures through the delivery of health care, education, social services, and advocacy efforts. We embrace our culturally diverse community and provide the highest quality care regardless of ability to pay.

We have witnessed great restructuring in the past year at the HIV AIDS Administration, and have come to find through this difficult transition, that permanent leadership is highly valuable and necessary to support the collaborative work. We applaud the efforts made to provide transparency and clearer lines of communication; the Bureau of Surveillance & Epidemiology has worked hard to ease the misconceptions and anxiety with regards to the new names-reporting process and the Prevention Department's Free Test Kits Distribution Project, which now dispenses kits with realistic expiration dates.

Thank you Councilman Catania and Committee members for your support in funding the Navigator-to-Care Project at Mary's Center and La Clinica del Pueblo this year, and for having made recommendations to sustain and expand this program. As such, we have been able to link and follow up with *everyone* testing positive for HIV to the care, support and treatment services with a culturally and linguistically suitable approach.

Today, we ask that you consider the following recommendations in your budget allocation:

Developing an on-line resource directory, including health and social care providers, testing sites, housing, prevention and education programs. This is an essential and long overdue project that can be done cost-effectively without the use of a paper product that will be outdated by the time it goes to print.

Continue the free testing kits program to support our efforts of HIV screening and improved coordination. Expand significantly the Partner Counseling and Referral program to link more people living with HIV to care. Currently, there is only one staff member at HAA for the entire District to confidentially notify partners. Combine HPV and HPV vaccine education *within* the HIV prevention education efforts and not solely leave this prospective responsibility to the Cancer or STD prevention bureaus. HIV has a unique vulnerability to HPV and the opportunity for us, community based organizations, to interlace this information in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner within our already established and extensive network should not be overlooked.

We are grateful once again for this opportunity to share our community perspective and for partnering with you to advance our city's public health agenda.

Thank you.