



Testimony Before
The New York City Council
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My name is Steve Coe and I am the Chief Executive Officer of Community Access, Inc. I would like to thank the City Council for their on-going commitment to sustaining and improving the lives of low income New Yorkers living with disabilities. Community Access provides a range of housing, job skills, employment placement and support services to formerly homeless, disabled and low-income individuals and families, including tenants with living with mental illness and HIV/AIDS. Community Access was founded in 1974 in response to New York's mass release of psychiatric patients from state institutions. Since that time, we have become a leading provider of supportive housing in New York City, currently operating over 950 units of supportive housing in 18 locations. I appreciate this opportunity to submit testimony regarding the substantial cuts to HASA funding of supportive housing for those with HIV and AIDS.

I ask the New York City Council to restore the \$5.1 city cuts to HASA funding. These cuts will directly impact the ability of supportive housing providers to provide critical on-site support services to individuals living with HIV and AIDS. Many of these individuals also struggle with mental illness, addiction, social isolation, and the aftereffects of years of living in institutional settings. Much needed on-site case management lines will be lost, as rental and operating costs are fixed. On-site support is what makes supportive housing so successful in improving the lives of tenants and reducing the use of expensive emergency services like shelters, hospitals, prisons and psychiatric centers. In the long run, the proposed cuts to HASA funding will not save money. Within 1 year, if 2% of those in housing lose their way and end up in hospitals, prisons or shelters, the costs to New York City will far outweigh any savings.

City-wide there are over 4,500 tenants living with HIV and AIDS in supportive housing. At Community Access we receive \$668,000 in HASA funding annually to support individuals living with HIV and AIDS in one of our sites on the Lower East Side. These funds provide rental assistance, a nutrition program and much needed on-site support services, including service coordination, counseling, medication education and assistance, budgeting, benefit advocacy, harm reduction services and connection to primary care services in the community. Equally importantly, our on-site staff develop and maintain trusting relationships with tenants, assisting them in identifying goals and moving forward with their

lives as citizens and community members. A 14% cut to our HASA funding would result in the loss of staff, and would significantly impact our ability to maintain the current level and quality of services provided to this vulnerable group. Supportive housing has been as effective as it has been because of creative funding from a variety of agencies, including HASA, DHS and DOHMH contracts. Together these contracts have supported a system that works. However, it is a system that is already stretched to its limit in terms of resources. In this fiscal year, we lost over 17% of our DHS support funding. Supportive housing providers and the individuals they serve cannot sustain another funding cut.

Community Access calls on the City Council to restore the \$5.1 million dollar proposed cut to HASA funding for some of the City's most vulnerable citizens. We are enormously grateful to the City Council for their past and continued support of low income New Yorkers living with disabilities, and ask that you restore these much needed funds. Thank you, again, for your continued support.

Steve Coe
Chief Executive Officer
Community Access, Inc.