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**Housing Action Illinois Testimony for Illinois Human Services Commission
Bob Palmer, Policy Director
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Among the deepest cuts in the Illinois Department of Human Services' fiscal year 2012 budget were a 52% reduction for the Emergency and Transitional Housing Program, to \$4.4 million, and a 38% reduction for the Homeless Prevention Program, to \$1.5 million. This was on top of accumulated cuts to other complimentary programs during the last few years, such as a 32% cut to the Homeless Youth Program since fiscal year 2008.

The Emergency and Transitional Housing Program provides temporary housing and critical supportive services to get adults back on their feet and help prevent future instability. The Homeless Prevention Program provides a small grant to families at risk of eviction or foreclosure. Both programs meet basic human needs and support other state government priorities, such as insuring that children stay in school and get health coverage, taking care of veterans and helping people find jobs.

Emergency and Transitional Housing

Here are some key program statistics from fiscal year 2010:

Total Number of Persons Served: 42,068 (29% under 18 years of age)
Average Cost Per Household to the State: \$304
Number of Turn-Aways Due to Insufficient Resources: 55,811

Impacts of the cuts to this program include:

- The City of Chicago has terminated its overnight emergency services shift for the homeless and laid off 24 employees in the city's Department of Family and Support Services. Their services helped people find shelter between midnight and 8 a.m.
- Helping Hands of Springfield is reducing their daytime hours and no longer offering showers and other services to people experiencing homelessness who do not have a bed at the shelter.
- The budget cuts have added to the Williamson County Family Crisis Center's pre-existing \$15,000 budget deficit. Even before the budget cuts the shelter had to turn away between two and three times the number it is able to house in a given year.
- West Suburban PADS is delaying the annual opening of their shelter for two weeks until October 1. This is the first time that they ever delayed the opening of the shelter for budgetary reasons. Total federal, state and local budget cuts have resulted in 20% less revenue for their emergency shelter program.
- The REST Interim Housing Program in Chicago's Uptown community is eliminating the 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily residential portion of their interim

housing program. As a result, when clients do not have case management or basic life skills meetings in their offices, REST will not be able to provide a safe place for them to be during the daytime hours.

Homeless Prevention

In total, the Homeless Prevention program has been cut by 87% since fiscal year 2009, when funding was \$11 million. Through fiscal year 2011 the funding cuts were mitigated by the availability of federal Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program (HPRP) funding provided through the Recovery Act. However, those funds have been exhausted in many parts of the state and all these federal funds will be gone early in the next state fiscal year.

For example, during the week of August 29, staff and board members from Housing Action Illinois visited several agencies in southern Illinois that provide homeless prevention services. Federal HPRP funding for southern Illinois has already been totally expended and some agencies have already spent their state funds for the current fiscal year to assist people displaced by flooding during the Spring of 2011.

The situation is much the same in other parts of the state. South Suburban PADS' rapid re-housing program using federal funds has served about 40 people since it began in January 2010 and about 15 people have graduated from it. It is estimated that funding for the program will run out in September 2012, but demand for rapid re-housing keeps increasing.

To deal with the exhaustion of HPRP funds, the City of Chicago recently decided to stop accepting new clients into the program, so they have sufficient resources to serve households receiving support as the program is phased out during the next six to nine months.

In fiscal year 2010, the average cost to the state per household to prevent homelessness was \$916. Of the 2,620 total households served that year, 88.6% were still housed four months after the end of the fiscal year.

Conclusion

The examples cited in this testimony demonstrate that cuts of human service programs hurt the people who need services, but also hinder the State of Illinois' efforts to promote economic recovery by eliminating jobs.

Housing Action Illinois asks the Human Services Commission to support additional revenue increases, such as expanding the sales tax base to include services, and other steps, such as debt restructuring to allow for the restoration of cuts to programs that service people experiencing homelessness and other human service programs that serve basic human needs.

For more information regarding this testimony, please contact Bob Palmer, Policy Director for Housing Action Illinois, at 312-939-6074 x. 206 or bob@housingactionil.org.