

**From:** [Scott Robbins](#)  
**To:** [Public Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** Testimony Alderman Meeting May 15, 2024 - Request To Restore Funding to Current Levels for HOPWA providers in Waterbury  
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Testimony of Scott M. Robbins  
Hearing May 15, 2024  
**Request To Restore Funding to Current Levels for HOPWA providers in Waterbury**

We have been informed that Independence Northwest's Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS funding (HOPWA) is going to be cut by 50%. We were told that the "committee" decided to keep more HOPWA funding in the New Haven area and this reduction in funding would take effect July 1, 2024. We also learned that StayWell Health Center is also slated for a 50% cut in their HOPWA funding, further reducing HOPWA services in the Waterbury area.

As the Program Director for Independence Northwest, I know first-hand that the decision to cut both Independence Northwest and StayWell will have a devastating and direct effect on the people in our programs and their well-being. HOPWA is federal funding from HUD that provides housing services for people living with HIV & AIDS. It is not a homelessness program; it is for people with AIDS who meet the financial eligibility requirements.

It is distributed based on an Eligible Metropolitan Statistical Area (EMSA) or region. The City of New Haven administers HOPWA funding for the entire EMSA which includes the Waterbury area. Waterbury has no other access to HOPWA funds. The New Haven area currently retains 76% of HOPWA funding and if this cut is approved, only 12% will be distributed to the Waterbury area. One of the city's HOPWA priorities (listed on page 7 of the RFP Consolidated Plan 2024-2025) is to "ensure that services are distributed and funded equitably across the entire EMSA."

Independence Northwest is a disability rights organization, based in Naugatuck, serving greater Waterbury and the northwest corner of CT. We have had a contract with the City of New Haven for over 25 years providing housing services for people living with HIV & AIDS in the Waterbury area. We have been rated as a "high-quality program" in site reviews, most recently scoring 133 of 135 possible points. **All of the HOPWA funding we receive through the City goes directly into individuals' rental subsidies for their scattered-site housing.** No salaries, program or overhead expenses are paid with these HOPWA funds.

IN is paying rental subsidies for 28 people and there are currently 74 people on a

waiting list. The 50% reduction of \$105,000.00 would force us to terminate rental subsidies for an estimated 15 - 20 clients/families, making most of them homeless beginning July 1, 2024.

To make this even worse, our clients have less than 90 days to figure out how they can begin to afford their rent or if they must move. As a result, some may face eviction. Most will be referred to emergency shelters creating an additional burden on the shelter system in New Haven and Waterbury. This one, seemingly arbitrary decision, has massive future implications for those cut from the program. The cut is unreasonable, cruel and damaging to individuals' well-being - the very people that HOPWA is required to assist.

We are imploring you to recommend at least flat funding of \$210,000.00 for Independence Northwest's HOPWA program for FY 2024 – 2025, and to restore StayWell's HOPWA funding as well.

