

Hello, my name is Andrea H. and I live in Naugatuck Connecticut. I receive rental assistance through Independence Northwest's Housing Opportunities Program. I am writing in strong opposition to the city of New Haven's proposed 50% cut to Independence Northwest's rental assistance program. The stated reason for the cut is to keep more funds in New Haven. They are currently retaining 76% of HOPWA funding. If this cut is approved, an estimated 20 people in Waterbury area won't be able to afford their current monthly rent.

This cut will harm me because I am a single mother of three children who is also living with HIV and only income is my disability. Their father passed away three years ago so I am truly on my own. I have been living with HIV for over 20 years and have applied for many types of housing help and have been on many waiting lists. Independence Northwest was the first one to finally accept me and give me the help that I have been needing all along. My health was in such a decline, and I was under so much stress before they came along that I almost died. Since Independence Northwest's help my health has dramatically gotten better and I do not have to stress about where we live or eat or electric because I can afford them all. Stress is a big problem for people with HIV it brings the immune system down which in turn lets the virus ramped. With this better situation my numbers are doing better more regularly, and I have even been told I look healthier and even younger than a few years ago. My children can now play outside safely, the schools here have special programs for two of my children with special needs and that is hard to recreate. The three of them no longer have to worry about where they live or if they have enough food and if at any moment their mother could die. They have been actually acting like children which gives me so much joy and less stress.

If this goes through it will not just make things like they were before, it will make it 50 times worse. The City of New Haven receives the federal HOPWA funding for housing services on behalf of the entire county, which includes the Waterbury area. The harm this cut will cause is made worse since I have less than 90 days to figure out how or where I am going to live. I urge you to restore the \$210,000.00 in funding to Independence Northwest's Housing Opportunities Program so I'm not homeless.

Sincerely,
Andrea H. 5-9-2024