

Statement of Patricia Nall  
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Thank you so much for inviting me to speak to you today. I am deeply concerned about the impact of the recession on my organization, on the community non-profits that we partner with to serve women and children, and on organizations like mine around the country. Our funding is being cut, and we are forced to lay off staff, just when the demand for our services from the unemployed, and those with reduced work hours, has grown. The result is that our communities and the people we serve are suffering and that suffering is compounded.

Let me tell you a little about the Women's Collective so that you can understand how closely we work with the other non-profits and local government agencies in DC, and how clearly we see the impact of the recession.

The Women's Collective serves women, girls and their families living with, or at risk for, HIV and AIDS. We provide outreach, testing and prevention services as well as case management services for the families of women who have been diagnosed with HIV or AIDS. I founded the Women's Collective in 1993 after my husband and daughter died from AIDS and I was diagnosed with HIV. We test over 600 women and men for HIV exposure a year and provide case management services to over 300 women and their families.

Unfortunately the recession has hit us hard. Since 2008 we have lost over \$700,000 in funding from government agencies, private foundations and individual donors; that's about 30% of our budget. Last year included in our layoffs were our Directors of Programs, two key leadership positions leaving our programs without dedicated program monitoring, our mental health therapist and another case management staffer. This year, our grant for HIV counseling and testing was slashed, and we had to lay off four additional staff members and numerous outreach workers. We no longer have staff to operate our mobile van. Overall, our staff has shrunk from 25 to 15. And at the same time, we are seeing an increase in people needing help, because we are seeing a significant increase in unemployment among our clients.

What does this mean for the women and children we serve? I anticipate that soon we will have to start a waiting list for our case management services. In addition, because we will no longer be able to do as much testing and outreach, many more women and girls will be exposed to the disease because they lack prevention information, or they will be diagnosed later in their illness when it will be harder to manage. Stemming the tide of infections among girls has become difficult on a shoe string and leaves girls vulnerable over their lifespan to HIV infection

The impact however is multiplied because of the effect of the recession on the other non-profits that we work with. As part of our case management services we refer women and families to agencies that provide short term shelter and long term housing, food, domestic violence support, substance abuse treatment, transportation to medical appointments,

utility assistance and other vital services. But these organizations are also facing much reduced budgets and are laying off staff or, sometimes, closing their doors. It has become much harder to find clients the services they need. That's true not just for women and children with HIV or AIDS; it's true for all kinds of community programs run by non-profits.

And DC is not unique. In April, the Women's Collective hosted national HIV and AIDS advocates from across the nation. They told me that this is happening in their communities as well.

What is the result? Bluntly, it means more women will die and more children will become orphans. Women will not get the medicine they need for lack of transportation; they won't have safe housing or adequate food so they will be much more susceptible to infections. More women will contract the HIV virus for lack of prevention information. Too many of their children will be hungry or homeless, and when they lose their mothers they will end up in foster care, which will only cost us all more in the long run. I am deeply concerned that we are returning to the same scarcity of information and services that I faced when I was first diagnosed in 1987. Our medical treatments are much improved but if we can't get people to the doctors or the other help they need the results will be very much the same.

It doesn't have to be like this. Organizations like mine would be able to put people to work immediately if funds were available. I could hire back my outreach workers today, giving people jobs and preventing many women from contracting AIDS. My sister organizations could hire people to help find housing, provide domestic violence counseling, or drive people to medical appointments. In my community, there are so many workers who need jobs, and so much work to be done.

If funds were available to provide these kinds of jobs, our economy would benefit and our communities would be stronger and healthier.