



ALCC

AIDS LEGAL COUNCIL of CHICAGO

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Ann Hilton Fisher, Esq.

MAIN OFFICE
Suite 2110
180 North Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60601-7454
312.427.8990 tel
312.427.8419 fax

info@aidslegal.com
www.aidslegal.com

JAMES MONROE SMITH
OUTREACH PROJECT
AT THE CORE CENTER
Room 4-260
2020 West Harrison Street
Chicago, Illinois 60612-3741
312.572.4766 tel/fax

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ALCC media contact: Kevin Mork 312-427-8990

kjmork@aidslegal.com

Bill to Repeal Illinois' Discriminatory HIV Notification Law Passes Senate Committee

The effort to repeal Illinois's outdated HIV principal reporting law took another step forward Wednesday when the Illinois Senate Public Health Committee voted 7-2 in support of HB 61, which repeals the principal notification sections of Illinois' Sexually Transmissible Disease Control Act. The bill now moves to the full Senate for a vote.

"We are so pleased that this bill again received bi-partisan support in the Senate committee", said Ann Fisher, Executive Director of the AIDS Legal Council of Chicago, who was in Springfield for the hearing. "Iris Martinez, the Senate sponsor, did a great job in response to sometimes hostile questioning, repeatedly reminding the committee that Illinois is the *only* state with a principal-notification requirement and that the requirement makes high-risk teens much less likely to get HIV testing and treatment."

Illinois law currently mandates that when a state or local health department receives a report of an HIV-positive student, that child's school principal must be notified. The principal then has authority to share this information with the superintendent, school nurse, classroom teacher, and "other persons as may be necessary." Recognizing the stigma involved with singling out HIV-positive students, a coalition of organizations has been working for many years to repeal this outdated, vague, and discriminatory law, with partners from the public health and medical communities, school nurses and social workers, ACLU of Illinois, AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Lurie Children's Hospital, and advocates throughout the state.

The bill must be called for a final vote in the Illinois Senate by the end of the legislative session on May 31, 2013.

Founded 25 years ago, AIDS Legal Council of Chicago works to preserve, promote, and protect the legal rights of men, women, children, and families in the metropolitan Chicago area impacted by HIV and AIDS. The Council provides free direct legal services to people in need, educates the public about HIV-related legal issues, and advocates for social policies that ensure fair treatment for all people affected by HIV and AIDS.

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