April 18, 2008

Honorable Richard N. Gottfried
LOB 822
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Assemblyman Gottfried:

On behalf of the HIV Health and Human Services Planning Council of New York, I write to strongly endorse Assembly Bill A09195 on HIV testing. The Planning Council, whose members are appointed by Mayor Michael Bloomberg, is comprised of service providers, physicians, advocates, and consumers of HIV/AIDS services. Planning Council members are charged with allocating approximately $110 million from the Health Resources and Services Administration for treatment and care for people living with HIV/AIDS. As experts in the HIV/AIDS field, we support the provisions of your bill – namely, testing will be offered in all medical visits, and permission for HIV testing will be folded into general consent for medical care with an opt-out provision and a durable signature. We applaud the overarching goal, namely, to increase the frequency of testing in order to identify individuals who are infected and link them to treatment and care. Offering testing to all will be far more equitable and effective than basing the decision to offer the test on a health care provider's assessment of an individual's risk.

I commend your decision to introduce this bill.

Cordially,

Soraya Elcock
Community Co-Chair
HIV Health and Human Service Planning Council of New York