

Bush plan expands reach of AIDS cash

Adds new areas for housing subsidies

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Nearly 50,000 people with AIDS in big cities like Los Angeles and New York get government help paying their rent. Not so for those in smaller cities like Anchorage, Alaska, Fargo, N.D., and Wichita, Kan.

President Bush wants to expand the housing program for low-income people with AIDS started in 1992, when his father was president.

Some view the recommendation as a positive gesture to homosexual-rights activists, who have been jittery of the new Republican president. Their pleasure was tempered with concern that the policy change was at odds with what they requested.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is spending about \$258 million this year on the AIDS housing subsidies, which help poor people who have trouble finding places to live. The president has been asked to increase that to \$300 million, with most of the new money going to communities that already have programs.

Instead, Mr. Bush announced Wednesday that without cutting present programs, HUD instead should add new areas.

Thirteen states do not receive money from the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS program: Alaska, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia and Wyoming.

To qualify, cities or regions must

have had at least 1,500 HIV cases.

In arguing for more money for existing programs, the president of the AIDS Housing Coalition said rising housing costs and longer life expectancies of the HIV-infected are burdening the programs.

"We welcome an expansion, but it has to be an expansion with an increase in funding. Otherwise, it will jeopardize current programs," said Gina Quattrochi, the group president who also oversees the Bailey House, a New York center for homeless AIDS patients.

She said without more money for existing programs, the Bush proposal could have the opposite effect, causing evictions of people with AIDS.

The White House referred calls about the proposal to HUD, where no one would comment on the plan.

Miss Quattrochi's group said in a report that more AIDS housing needs have been reported in the cities of Boston, Dallas, Honolulu, Los Angeles, Miami and New York and in communities in Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey and Texas.

They said waiting lists for assistance included about 5,000 in New York, 1,800 in Boston and about 500 each in Dallas, Los Angeles and Washington.

Homosexual-rights activists have been closely watching Mr. Bush, particularly after a February report that the president was abolishing the Office of National AIDS Policy. Mr. Bush said later that the office would not be closed and that "we're concerned about AIDS inside our White House, make no mistake about it."