

**Written Testimony of the Vermont People with AIDS Coalition
Opposition to Tax on Dietary Supplements
March 19, 2014**

The benefits of taking nutritional supplements and vitamins to promote overall health are well documented. For persons with suppressed immune systems, such as those in our community living with HIV/AIDS, taking supplements can significantly impact their health for the better.

According to a recent article in the Journal of the American Medical Association "Micronutrient supplementation has improved markers of HIV disease progression (CD4 cell count, HIV viral load) and mortality in clinical trials" (Baum, Campa, et al., 2013). Sadly, despite the clear connection between improved HIV health and the taking of vitamins, cost is often a barrier to taking supplements for people living with HIV.

One example that demonstrates the importance of keeping vitamins and supplements affordable is the Vermont People With AIDS Coalition's Buyers Coop - Since 1998, the Coalition has offered supplements and vitamins through the Buyers Coop at significantly discounted prices. Even with these discounts, *roughly 95% of participants rely on over \$5,000 in grant-funded scholarships to help them access these products annually.*

The Vermont People with AIDS Coalition along with the undersigned statewide AIDS Service Organizations, feel strongly that any changes at the legislative level that result in increased costs of vitamins and supplements will effectively inhibit those we serve from maintaining their health. We respectfully ask that this committee oppose the tax in question on these products so that they are accessible to all Vermonters.

Sincerely,

Roy Belcher
Executive Director
Vermont People With AIDS Coalition

along with

AIDS Project of Southern Vermont
HIV/HCV Resource Center
Twin States Network
Vermont CARES

Baum, M. K., Campa, A., et al., (2013). Effect of micronutrient supplementation on disease progression in asymptomatic, antiretroviral-naive, hiv-infected adults in botswana. a randomized clinical trial. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 310(20), pg. 2154-2163. Retrieved from <http://jama.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=1785464>