

Dear Mayor Nutter,

The undersigned organizations and individuals urge you to find the means to support and fund the Critical Path Project.

For over 15 years, the Critical Path Project has been a major force in the Greater Philadelphia metropolitan region and worldwide in bridging the digital divide, offering free dial up Internet access and email accounts with no ads and no restrictions to over 10,000, mostly low-income families, as well as offering email, website hosting, and electronic mailing list hosting to local non-profit organizations, DHS family centers, and affinity groups throughout the nation.

We are currently the Internet backbone for the majority of HIV and LGBTQ organizations in Philadelphia, and thousands of members of these communities utilize our free services. This is particularly important for those who cannot afford high speed connections at home.

For the past six years, Critical Path has had a contract from DHS to provide Internet connectivity and host webpages for the Family Support Centers in the public schools. In addition to these functions, which Critical Path has always fulfilled, the contract has become part of the funding infrastructure that supports the Critical Path enterprise. This fiscal year, the contract was extended for two months, and is now due to end on August 31. While we recognize that DHS may have other funding needs at this time, we want to call to your attention the fact that this will be a devastating loss for Critical Path, and could result in our having to close down the entire network.

If we are forced to close it, the loss of Critical Path will resonate throughout the Philadelphia region, **including Camden, Burlington, Gloucester and Salem counties in New Jersey.**

- Over 10,000 people in the greater Philadelphia Metro region, mostly low-income, would lose their Internet access from Critical Path, many of whom may not have the skills or knowledge to know how to get access any other way at this time. **CRITPATH IS USED ON A DAILY BASIS BY OUR HIV POSTIVE CLIENTS AND OUR NEGATIVE CLIENTS WHO ARE AT HIGH RISK OF INFECTION AT OUR RAY OF HOPE DROP-IN CENTER IN CAMDEN. THE INTERNET IS USED BY OUR CLIENTS TO SECURE ASSISTANCE, LOOK FOR EMPLOYMENT, ETC.**
- Thousands of people would lose access to their email accounts and the data saved in their inboxes and folders, including staff at organizations many of which receive funds from the City of Philadelphia, such as GALAEI, ASIAC, BEBASHI, The AIDS Law Project, Philadelphia FIGHT, **THE AIDS COALITION OF SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY** and nearly 25 more.
- Over 100 electronic Mailing lists, with thousands of local subscribers, many of which are key ways in which the non-profit community, educators, HIV researchers, and low-income Philadelphians discuss topics of importance to them and spread and receive information, will be shut down and forced to find another way to manage their lists.
- Nearly 75 websites, the majority of which are non-profits funded by the city of Philadelphia, such as Project SAFE, CHOICE, COLOURS, Asian Americans United, and many more, will be shut down and forced find money in their budgets to pay for hosting and rapidly find an alternative solution. Shutting down these websites, for even a short time means that those in the community, will not have access life-saving information. **THE AIDS COALITION IS ONE SUCH WEBSITE. WE ALSO UTILIZE CRITPATH FOR OUR EMAIL SYSTEM**

We urge you to find the means to refund the Critical Path Project and by doing so put digital inclusion at the top of your agenda. In order to more fully describe the Critical Path system and the important role it plays, we are requesting a meeting with you, along with a small representation of the organizations and individuals represented below. We will contact your office for your response.

We thank you for your action and leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Arthur H. Dion". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

Arthur H. Dion
President
AIDS Coalition of Southern New Jersey