

Wednesday, August 30, 2023

Dear Members of Congress,

As executive Directors of over 130 global, national, state, and local HIV advocacy organizations as well as organizations representing people living with and affected by HIV, we write to request your support in a time of unprecedented concern for our movement. Specifically, we are asking you to do whatever you can to *support the HIV funding levels and report language proposed by the Senate LHHS appropriations subcommittee for FY24 and a clean, five year PEPFAR reauthorization*. Additionally, next week, on **Tuesday September 5th at 4pm ET**, a large coalition of national and global HIV/AIDS organizations will hold a press conference in front of the US Senate in an effort to #SaveHIVFunding. **You and your staff are invited to attend and, of course, welcome to speak in support of robust funding for the domestic and global HIV responses.**

As you are undoubtedly aware, the House LHHS appropriations subcommittee has proposed slashing \$767M in HIV funding for FY24, including eliminating funds specifically designated for the bipartisan Ending the HIV Epidemic initiative. At the same time, PEPFAR is seeing unprecedented threats to its reauthorization since it was first established by President George W. Bush in 2003 to address HIV/AIDS globally. Now is the time for our champions in Congress to show up and say that we will not turn our backs on people living with HIV and that we remain committed to our efforts to end HIV as an epidemic by 2030. Should these existential threats to our progress come to pass, we will miss national and global targets to end the epidemic, undermine the successful work of HIV service organizations everywhere, and threaten the lives and wellbeing of vulnerable communities all across the US and around the world. We appreciate that both the FY24 House and Senate State, Foreign Operations bills maintain crucial funding for PEPFAR and the Global Fund.

To allow these catastrophic cuts to occur would be particularly devastating as we find our movement on the verge of significant, and long sought victories. US investments in research have driven forward the advent of effective treatment, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for individuals not living with HIV, and research confirming that people living with HIV who achieve an undetectable viral load cannot transmit the virus sexually. That US funded research, combined with global and domestic investments in services for people living with HIV, has resulted in treatment access for well over 20 million individuals, including at least [half a million Americans](#) living with HIV who receive support annually, and [saved over 25 million lives](#) globally through PEPFAR. Domestic HIV prevention efforts have accelerated with President Barack Obama's establishment of the first National HIV/AIDS Strategy in 2010 and the announcement of the Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE) initiative by President Donald Trump in 2019, resulting in a 16% reduction in new HIV infections since 2017 in America's most highly affected jurisdictions. Along with recent calls from President Biden for a National PrEP Program to amplify EHE efforts, and exciting new long-acting treatment and prevention options, our

movement stands on the edge of bringing the epidemic under control for all American communities and for communities around the world. We have already seen that kind of success internationally in places like the [UK](#), [Australia](#), and [at least five nations receiving PEPFAR funding](#) including Zimbabwe and Botswana.

In contrast, a \$767M loss to domestic funding and the failure to reauthorize PEPFAR would cost our communities and our nation dearly. All existing progress would be put at risk. Every new HIV infection in the US translates into \$501,000 in lifetime healthcare costs, meaning that even an increase of just 2,000 new infections in the US will obliterate any savings House appropriators are hoping to achieve. Five thousand Americans still die from AIDS-related causes each year; worldwide there is still one AIDS-related death every minute. Those numbers will grow if we cannot ensure ongoing funding for key support services. The PEPFAR program has served as a bridge between the US and over 50 countries around the world; failure to reauthorize such a highly respected program and the health crises likely to result would erode US standing and influence.

These attacks on HIV funding would compound the many unique challenges our field has faced since the emergence of COVID and the mpox outbreak last summer. As experts in addressing infectious diseases under extraordinary conditions, our organizations and HIV leaders in the national and international HIV/AIDS responses have stepped in to help advise political leaders, partner with health departments, foster critical research, and provide additional, frequently uncompensated, direct services to mitigate these emerging threats in marginalized communities. We did so all while continuing to provide critical HIV-related services to our communities. It is therefore particularly dismaying that the House has put forward an appropriations bill that would walk away from the US commitment to end HIV.

We ask that you speak out to ensure that we fully fund our domestic and global anti-HIV efforts. Our nation's historic response to HIV/AIDS has been in so many ways a bipartisan victory and a source of pride for Democrats and Republicans alike. It is an inspiring story of what can happen when we place politics aside and invest in scientific progress and compassionate services that open the door to effective treatment and prevention. We hope that you will join us to honor this history, to lift up our ongoing progress in saving lives and preventing new infections, and to call for continued investment in our domestic and global efforts to end HIV as an epidemic.

Sincerely,

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