



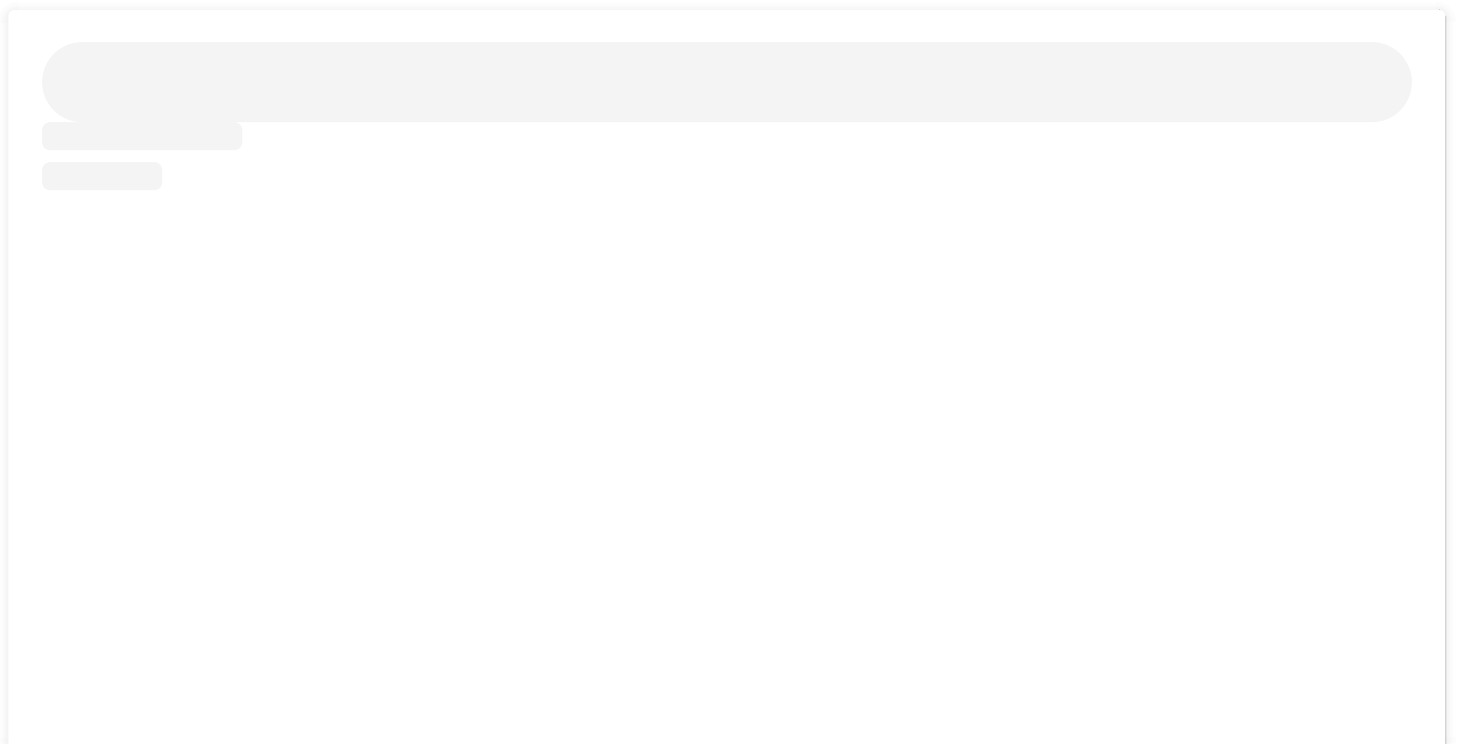
Activists Arrested Protesting Secretary Rubio's New Attacks on Lifesaving Global AIDS and Health Programs

HIV activists held signs and chanted, "Rubio's Cuts Kill People with AIDS, PEPFAR Saves Lives!" as they were arrested by Capitol Police.

June 2, 2026 By Health GAP

(Washington, DC) 10 activists from Housing Works, Health GAP, Treatment Action Group and ACT UP were arrested today, June 2, in the Dirksen Senate Office Building, disrupting Secretary of State Marco Rubio's [testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee](#). The activists held signs and chanted, "Rubio's Cuts Kill People with AIDS, PEPFAR Saves Lives!" as they were arrested by Capitol Police.

The activists were protesting new attacks by Rubio on lifesaving global HIV and health programs, and were demanding lawmakers block implementation of these plans. After cancelling thousands of lifesaving health awards in 2025 when he gutted USAID, Marco Rubio is now [abruptly eliminating the Centers for Disease Control's \(CDC\) role in implementing global HIV programs](#), including CDC's global capabilities in disease outbreak and surveillance for pandemics beyond HIV.





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A post shared by Housing Works (@housingworks)

CDC currently supports approximately 12 million people on HIV treatment across 51 countries. Experts including [8 former CDC Directors under Republican and Democratic administrations have spoken out against this move, which would dismantle PEPFAR](#). Recent [data show that, since Rubio took control, PEPFAR has reported sharp decreases](#) in the numbers of people newly tested, diagnosed, treated for HIV, and accessing HIV prevention tools. These outcomes would have been far more disastrous if not for CDC's role in PEPFAR implementation, which Rubio is now trying to eliminate.

"Congress must stop Secretary Rubio before he dismantles PEPFAR," said Kendall Martinez-Wright of TAG. "Rubio continues to defy the will of Congress and the American people who want this program restored and repaired. Under his leadership he is diverting funding and trying to eliminate the essential role of technical experts in global HIV and global health, while program performance is flailing."

Activists were also protesting Rubio's diversion of \$2 billion in Congressionally appropriated FY25 global health funding, including \$330 million to combat HIV, \$250 million to fight malaria, \$320 million for maternal and child health programs, and nearly \$650 million in global health security programs. [17 Senators recently wrote to Rubio regarding this crisis](#). Finally, Rubio is using [secret bilateral health deals to blackmail some African governments, conditioning their HIV treatment and prevention funding](#) on access by the Trump Administration to critical minerals and national health data. Activists are demanding the decoupling of these conditions from health funding.

"Rubio's elimination of USAID in 2025 has already killed hundreds of thousands of adults and children, and has fueled the rapid, virtually unchecked spread of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo," said Charles King, CEO of Housing Works. DRC had been the second largest recipient of USAID funding, decimated under Rubio's watch. The activists are part of the Save PEPFAR Coalition, and have challenged high ranking Trump administration officials and members of Congress since February 2025, demanding an end to attacks on PEPFAR and global health programs, which enjoy [widespread bipartisan support](#), according to a recent national poll of midterm voters.

[This press release](#) was originally published June 2, 2026, by Health GAP.