



AIDS Activists Arrested in DC Protesting the White House for Blocking \$977M in HIV Funding

Trump and Vought withheld over \$977 million that Congress had approved for PEPFAR global HIV funds, according to activists' new evidence.

March 9, 2026 By Health GAP and Housing Works

(Washington, DC) 13 activists were arrested March 5 in the Cannon House Office Building Rotunda, during a civil disobedience led by Housing Works, Health GAP, the Treatment Action Group, and a coalition of ex-PEPFAR staff and development experts. The activists were chanting "AIDS Funding Cuts Kill" and unfurled massive banners reading "TRUMP AND VOUGHT KILL PEOPLE WITH AIDS WORLDWIDE," "OVER 200,000 DEATHS SINCE JANUARY 2025," and "HANDS OFF PEPFAR." (High resolution images available on request.)



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The activists also [released new evidence that](#), one year into the Trump Administration, more than \$977 million in appropriated PEPFAR funding for HIV prevention and treatment was unspent by the end of Fiscal Year (FY) 2025—triple the amount unspent at the end of FY 2024. Activists predict this backlog will worsen rapidly in FY 2026 unless Congress immediately reasserts its Constitutionally-mandated oversight authority.

In addition, the funding for Centers for Disease Control’s (CDC’s) PEPFAR programs will run out in just three weeks, by April 1 2026—because only 45% of their FY26 funding has been transferred from the State Department. Unless funding is transferred immediately, CDC’s global HIV programs across sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Caribbean will grind to a halt.

“PEPFAR has saved more than 26 million lives and changed the trajectory of an epidemic. However, the Trump administration’s decision, over the objection of Republicans in Congress, to freeze PEPFAR funding has caused decades of progress to come undone and has been a death sentence for people with HIV relying on life-saving treatment. The U.S. must immediately restore PEPFAR funding and regain our standing in the global fight against HIV,” said Charles King, CEO of Housing Works.



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The Republican-controlled Congress has fully funded the global AIDS program, signaling bipartisan support for PEPFAR. However, Trump and Vought’s attacks on foreign assistance are obstructing PEPFAR from spending funds and saving lives. Activists anticipate the White House is planning its

own shadow control over these funds, escaping the scrutiny of Congressional oversight. [Vought was recently caught having taken \\$15 million in funding that had been allocated for foreign aid, to fund his private security detail.](#)

“Trump and Vought are responsible for stealing lifesaving prevention and treatment from countless people with HIV worldwide,” said Asia Russell, Executive Director of Health GAP. “Congress must wake up, wrest back its authority, and immediately expend PEPFAR’s funding.” In addition, the Department of State has instituted a PEPFAR data blackout, refusing to share PEPFAR’s program results—a level of secrecy that is unprecedented for a program that had been radically transparent regarding where money was being spent and its funding impact. And [exploitative bilateral deals, for example with Zambia](#), are using HIV funding as a bargaining chip to secure U.S. access to Zambia’s vast mineral wealth.

“This administration’s cuts to PEPFAR and its elimination of USAID are nothing less than savage. We demand that Congress take back its Constitutionally-mandated power of the purse and assure that US funds are fully expended on these life-saving programs,” said Kendall Martinez-Wright, TAG’s Government Relations and Policy Associate. “The price of this impoundment will be millions of preventable deaths and unnecessary new infections. We demand that Congress hold oversight hearings, interrogate Secretary of State Marco Rubio and OMB Director Russell Vought under oath, and start exercising its Constitutional powers.”

In the U.S., cuts to HIV programs and research in the U.S. are also growing, in what activists called a campaign of cruelty, with [HIV treatment programs across 20 states](#) planning to force people off their life-saving HIV treatment and onto waiting lists. Activists are demanding Trump, Vought, Rubio, and Congress:

- Activists are calling for full obligation of appropriated PEPFAR funds and rejection of growing political interference in global and domestic HIV programs
- Immediately release already-appropriated, unobligated PEPFAR funds
- Break the blackout on PEPFAR data, so Congress and people with HIV know how funding is being spent and can program based on data
- Activists are calling for full obligation of appropriated PEPFAR funds and rejection of growing political interference in global and domestic HIV programs.

[This press release](#) was originally published March 5, 2026, by Health GAP and Housing Works.

