



# AIDS Foundation of Chicago's President and CEO to Step Down

John Peller joined AIDS Foundation Chicago in 2005 and became CEO in 2014. Read about his accomplishments at AFC during his tenure.

April 8, 2026 By AIDS Foundation Chicago

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AIDS Foundation Chicago announced today that President and CEO John Peller will step down in December 2026, concluding more than a decade of transformational leadership.

Since joining AFC in 2005 and becoming CEO in 2014, Peller has guided the organization through historic progress in HIV prevention, treatment, housing, and health equity. John began his career with AFC in 2005 as the organization's Springfield lobbyist, and he achieved many groundbreaking policy changes alongside coalition partners during his years in advocacy. His leadership at AFC coincided with major medical advancements in HIV treatment and prevention, including the introduction of PrEP and the understanding that viral suppression can prevent HIV transmission. John worked to address systemic issues and social determinants of health, expanding the organization's mission to include ending homelessness, and establishing a racial equity action plan and harm reduction programs at AFC. Advancing access to HIV treatment, prevention, and housing toward the goal of ending the HIV epidemic in Illinois will be an enduring hallmark of John's legacy.

A national search for AFC's next CEO will begin later this year. Peller will continue to lead the organization through December 2026. AFC leadership has developed an intentional and planned transition, and the AFC Board and Peller aim for him to overlap with the incoming CEO to ensure continuity. Board Vice Chair Cecil Dearborne will lead the Board Search Committee and Board Treasurer Patrick Strieck will lead the CEO Transition Taskforce.

"Leading AFC has been the honor of my life. AFC has been my home, my passion, and my purpose for 21 years," Peller said. "I am incredibly proud of what we have accomplished together over the past 12 years that I have served as CEO, expanding housing, advancing racial and health equity, removing barriers to HIV care, and supporting nearly 9,000 people each year with dignity and compassion."

"I have been thinking about this transition for some time. After 12 years, I'm ready for change and I believe that AFC is ready for new energy and new ideas to guide its next chapter. I do not know exactly what's next for me, and honestly, that is exciting," Peller added. "AFC is strong, stable,

and on a powerful trajectory. I am committed to ensuring a transition where I work alongside the new CEO until the end of 2026. I will support the Board, staff, and community every step of the way.”

“We are so thankful to John for his indelible service to AFC and the HIV movement for so many years,” said Yusef Garcia, Chair of the Board of Directors for AFC. “He is leaving behind a strong and resilient organization that is achieving life-changing and lifesaving results for our clients and communities. We all stand on the shoulders of those who came before us, and John is a giant.”

John Peller’s accomplishments at AFC include:

- AFC significantly expanded its scale and impact, growing staff by 50% since he became President/CEO, increasing its budget by more than 68% to over \$40 million, and now serving nearly 9,000 people annually with individualized housing, medical care, case-management support, and other critical services.
- John has been a driving force behind major statewide and national policy achievements, including co-launching Getting to Zero Illinois to end the HIV epidemic by 2030, securing wins such as Expedited Partner Therapy, expanded access to PrEP, and the 2021 decriminalization of HIV in Illinois, as well as helping advance federal reforms including the Affordable Care Act.
- John has been a leading champion for equity throughout his tenure, guiding AFC in suing the Trump administration twice with leadership from Lambda Legal to protect speech about racism, equity, inclusion and transgender rights. He also drove AFC’s internal equity commitments, including adopting its first Race Equity Action Plan and a comprehensive rebranding to center equity and inclusion.
- AFC strengthened efforts to end both the HIV epidemic and homelessness by expanding housing access: from 866 units for people living with HIV in 2014 to more than 1,100 today.
- AFC achieved the largest growth in individual giving and major gifts in the organization’s recent history.

- Team to End AIDS, AFC's charitable endurance running team, grew by more than 300%, reflecting expanded participation and fundraising success.
- AFC established a board giving process that resulted in 100% Board participation in annual giving for more than a decade.
- More than 90% of clients in the Ryan White case-management program achieved viral suppression, demonstrating the effectiveness of AFC's care model and long-term client support.

[This press release](#) was originally published April 8, 2026, by AIDS Foundation Chicago on AIDSChicago.org.