What Do AIDS Groups Say About Trump's 2019 Budget Proposal?

Hint: It would slash HIV funds by over $100 million nationally and cause 300,000 deaths each year globally.

February 16, 2018 By Trent Straube

Earlier this week, Trump released his proposed budget for fiscal year 2019. As The AIDS Institute points out, the domestic cuts include:

- $58 million from the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program
- $40 million from HIV programs at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- $26 million from AIDS housing programs

What's more, despite a 300 percent increase in new cases of hepatitis C, which is a common coinfection among people with HIV, Trump's suggested budget does not increase funding for the CDC's viral hepatitis programs.

"Congress has soundly rejected these proposed cuts in the past, and we trust they will do so again," said Carl Schmid, deputy executive director of The AIDS Institute, in the group's statement on Trump's budget. "Additionally, since Congress has yet to finalize the Fiscal Year 2018 spending bill, we continue to urge them to increase CDC viral hepatitis programs by $100 million to address the rapid rise in new viral hepatitis, HIV and [sexually transmitted infections] associated with injection drug use."

Other HIV groups highlighted additional problems with the 2019 budget. Fenway Health, a Boston-based group that advocates for the LGBT and HIV/AIDS populations, noted that Trump's proposal ends the expansion of state Medicaid programs that occurred under the Affordable Care Act (ACA, or Obamacare). Medicaid expansion has been pivotal to providing health insurance coverage to people living with HIV.

What's more, according to Fenway Health, the budget allows work requirements as a condition for eligibility for Medicaid. It also endangers $3.6 billion in funding to community health centers, which serve vulnerable groups such as Black, Latino, HIV-positive and low-income individuals.

“The proposed cuts in domestic HIV prevention and treatment would undermine the dramatic progress seen since the implementation of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy,” said Sean Cahill, PhD, Fenway’s director of health policy research. “This budget proposes a radical rejection of the social compact that has sustained our country for half a century.”

Trump also wants to cut the nation’s global HIV/AIDS funds by 20 percent, which amounts to more than $1 billion. According to “Red Ribbon or White Flag? The Future of the U.S. Global AIDS Response,” a report by global advocacy group the ONE campaign, these cuts would result in 300,000 deaths and 1.75 million new infections each year.

Specifically, Trump would cut $800 million from bilateral HIV efforts including the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which has always enjoyed bipartisan support, and $225 million from The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

The cuts would arrive as global efforts to fight HIV have resulted in a 47 percent drop in AIDS-related deaths since PEPFAR’s creation in 2003. For more about the global impact of the budget, check out this Daily Beast article.

For related news, read the opinion piece in POZ by the HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA) titled “Trump’s Latest Threat to People With HIV.”

And for more insight on the proposed 2019 budget and how it compares with the 2018 budget Congress is currently working on, read AIDS United’s POZ blog entry “A Tale of Two Budgets.”

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