AIDSWatch 2018 Honors 3 Lawmakers and 3 HIV Advocates

The six Leadership Awards are part of the annual HIV lobbying event in Washington, DC.

March 27, 2018 By Trent Straube

Three lawmakers and three HIV activists received leadership awards during a ceremony at the 25th annual AIDSWatch lobbying event held March 26 and 27 at our nation's capital.

According to an AIDSWatch press release, The Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation (ETAF), which sponsors AIDSWatch, awarded the fourth annual Elizabeth Taylor Legislative Leadership Awards to:

- Thomas K. Duane, former New York state senator, for his longstanding commitment to the treatment and care of people living with HIV in New York;

- Brian Sims, Pennsylvania state representative, for his efforts to mandate that insurance companies cover post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) and pre-Exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) in Pennsylvania; and

- Carlos Guillermo Smith, Florida state representative, for his role in recent negotiations with Publix to ensure its employee health plans covered PrEP.

In addition, the three groups that organize AIDSWatch—AIDS United, the Treatment Access Expansion Project and the US People Living with HIV Caucus—honored three individuals whose leadership empowers those with HIV. This year's recipients of the Positive Leadership Awards are:

- Cecilia Chung, senior director of strategic projects at the Transgender Law Center;

- Ronald Johnson, former vice president for policy & advocacy at AIDS United;

- Venita Ray, public policy manager at Legacy Community Health.

“This year’s Positive Leadership Award recipients have been at the forefront of working with key communities in HIV, including transgender women and men, African Americans and the epidemic in the South,” said HIV Caucus chair Andrew Spieldenner, PhD, in the press release.

“The commitment Brian Sims, Carlos Guillermo Smith and Thomas K. Duane have made to prevent new cases of HIV and to support those living with HIV and AIDS in their communities is exactly what we need to end this epidemic here at home,” added Joel Goldman, managing director of ETAF. “We are proud to honor Elizabeth Taylor’s legacy and recognize them for their contributions to furthering our mission.”

In related news, several of the recipients participated in an AIDSWatch panel discussion of elected and appointed officials living with and affected by HIV:

Cornelius Baker (far left) moderates a panel of elected and appointed officials (past and present) who are living with and affected by HIV at AIDSWatch 2018. From left: Cecilia Chung, Rep. Brian Sims, Tom Duane and Richard Trojanski @aidsunited #aidswatch2018 #hivadvocate #hivawareness

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You can learn more about AIDSWatch on the AIDS United website here, where you'll find advocacy briefs, policy updates and photos. For minute-by-minute updates, search for the hashtag #AIDSWatch on social media and visit AIDS United's Facebook page.

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