AIDSWatch 2026

This year’s theme was “Defending Progress, Demanding Justice.”

May 18, 2026 By Joe Mejía

Billed as “the largest constituent-driven HIV federal advocacy event in the country,” AIDSWatch has since 1993 annually convened hundreds of HIV advocates, leaders and allies in Washington, DC, to share their stories with members of Congress and advocate for policies and funding to end the HIV epidemic. Organized by AIDS United, the U.S. People Living with HIV Caucus (USPLHIV) and the Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation at Harvard Law School, this year’s event took place from March 16 through 18; the theme was “Defending Progress, Demanding Justice.”

Topics on this year’s agenda included mitigating the impact of federal funding cuts on vulnerable communities and supporting HIV prevention efforts and increased access to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to prevent HIV. As usual, AIDSWatch also educated participants on priority issues via workshops. For the first time, two of this year’s workshops were conducted entirely in Spanish. This historic milestone served as evidence that despite the Trump administration’s disdain for diversity, equity and inclusion, the HIV and AIDS community believes unity is a source of strength. Meanwhile across the Potomac River, infectious disease science was the focus of the concurrent SYNChronicity 2026 conference on HIV, HCV, STIs, drug user health and LGBTQ health held at the Renaissance Arlington Capital View Hotel in Virginia.

Reflecting on AIDSWatch, AIDS United president and CEO Carl Baloney Jr. stated: “AIDSWatch 2026 was a powerful demonstration of collective advocacy at a pivotal moment for the HIV movement. Our advocates came to Washington not just to observe but to demand that their voices be heard. They made it unequivocally clear that progress in the fight against HIV does not happen by accident; it requires sustained political will and unwavering commitment to justice.”



"Real Housewives" stars NeNe Leakes, Marysol Patton, Phaedra Parks, Melissa Gorga, Erika Jayne, Luann de Lesseps and Candiace Dillard Bassett joined Tristan Schukraft, CEO of online PrEP provider MISTR@Countessluann, @heyMISTR/Instagram

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