Assessing the Trump Administration's HIV and LGBT Policies in 2018

To quote the president: SAD!

January 22, 2019 By Trent Straube

The Trump administration has been "notably absent from leadership on HIV/AIDS," for most of its two years in power, according to a policy brief from the Fenway Institute, a center for research, education and policy development regarding LGBT and HIV-related issues.

The cover of the policy briefThe Fenway Institute

The 30-page brief is titled “The Trump Administration Continued to Advance Discriminatory

Policies and Practices Against LGBT People and People Living With HIV in 2018." You can read and download it (for free!) here.

"In just two years, we have witnessed the rollback of rights and protections that took decades to win. It's difficult, if not impossible, to estimate the full extent of harm now taking place," said Sean Cahill, PhD, director of health policy research at The Fenway Institute, in a Fenway press release. "It is undeniable that LGBT people and people living with HIV are now much more vulnerable to discrimination in health care, social services, employment, education, and access to basic government services."

The institute is part of Fenway Health, a community health center in Boston that serves the LGBT and HIV populations.

The policy brief includes several sections relevant to HIV. In listing the Trump administration's discrimination against people with HIV, the brief includes specific examples, such as:

- Failing to appoint a policy director for the White House Office of National AIDS Policy (the position has been vacant two years)

- Firing the entire Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS (PACHA) in 2017 and then leaving it unfilled all of 2018

- Proposing to change the way Medicare Part D formularies are set up, meaning that insurance companies have more control over which HIV meds people are allowed access to—and how much they cost

- Allowing the Peace Corps to dismiss members living with HIV and to deny HIV-negative members access to HIV prevention drug Truvada as PrEP, or pre-exposure prophylaxis. (The Peace Corps is an independent agency of the U.S. government whose leaders are appointed by the U.S. president.)

- Undermining the Affordable Care Act (ACA, or Obamacare), the program through which millions of Americans obtain health insurance coverage.

But all the marks regarding HIV weren't negative. The policy brief notes that in December 2018,

Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar said the HHS would update the National HIV/AIDS Strategy, which was launched in 2010 and updated in 2015 through 2020. What's more, Azar said the update would highlight PrEP and address HIV disparities among African Americans, Latinos and gay men.

You can read a roundup of the Trump administration's actions as they pertain to LGBT people in the Fenway press release. Of course, you'll find many more details in the full policy brief.

In related news, Peace Corps volunteer Romany Tin was on the cover of POZ last summer. To read more about him and the HIV policies at the Peace Corps, click here.

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