Funding Cuts Threaten National and Global Progress on HIV

The Trump administration is seeking deep cuts to funding for HIV prevention and services.

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During his first term, President Donald Trump launched an initiative to end the HIV epidemic in the United States. But midway through his second term, that effort is in shambles. The administration is seeking deep cuts to funding for HIV prevention and services, though some research may be largely spared.

In June, House Republicans released a 2027 budget proposal that would eliminate nearly $800 million in funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's domestic HIV prevention work and cut $225 million from the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program. Already facing budget pressure, several state AIDS Drug Assistance Programs are scaling back. PrEP4All executive director Jeremiah Johnson suggests that public backlash against the CDC following COVID-19 has hit HIV prevention hard. "It's disheartening and alarming," he told Politico.

What's more, the administration has implemented policies that harm some of the key populations most affected by HIV, such as transgender people. "It's back to this culture of blaming the victim that is just so reminiscent of the early days of HIV," said former
National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases director Jeanne Marrazzo, MD, MPH, who was ousted last year.

The global picture is also dire after the decimation of USAID, which channeled much of the funding for PEPFAR, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. The administration plans to phase out PEPFAR funding for South Africa—which has the world's biggest HIV epidemic—because its government allegedly discriminates against white people. Congress has so far held the line against some of the most drastic cuts, but the program remains in jeopardy.

In a report released ahead of the United Nations High-Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS in late June, UNAIDS warned of a "perilous moment," given funding cuts, a retreat on human rights and lack of prioritization of HIV prevention and services. "There's no question that this is the most serious

disruption in the HIV response since the world came together to fight this disease," says UNAIDS executive director Winnie Byanyima.

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