As National HIV Rates Drop, This State Sees a 35% Spike

Since 1991, Arizona law has prohibited schools from promoting safer sex methods for gay people.

May 5, 2017

Between 2010 and 2015, the HIV rate in Arizona jumped 35 percent, while it actually decreased 9 percent in the United States as a whole, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and reported by ABC15.

“This is a public health issue that we now have the resources to completely prevent,” Glen Spencer, executive director of Aunt Rita’s Foundation, an AIDS organization in Phoenix, told the Arizona news channel.

Part of the problem, he said, is that schools do not teach comprehensive sex education. In fact, since 1991, state law has prohibited promoting safer-sex methods as being safe for gay people. The law also prohibits anything that promotes “a homosexual lifestyle.” Last year, state legislators voted down a bill that would have changed this law.

“Not talking about it isn’t going to make it go away,” Angel Zavala, a 20-year-old recently diagnosed with HIV in the state, said to ABC15.

One way to combat the HIV increase, Spencer added, is to increase awareness of Truvada as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), the daily pill to prevent contracting HIV for those at risk.

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