This Is What Nearly 600 HIV Advocates Look Like on Capitol Hill

Check out these inspiring images from AIDSWatch 2019, including the three Positive Leadership Award honorees.

April 2, 2019 By Trent Straube

Nearly 600 HIV activists gathered in the nation's capital April 1 and 2 for AIDSWatch, the largest HIV advocacy event of the year. After a day and evening of conferences, meetings, networking sessions, speeches and awards (more on those later), participants rallied the morning of April 2 in front of the U.S. Capitol before splitting into teams and lobbying their respective congressional representatives. (Tweets posted throughout this article capture the AIDSWatch action.)

> Just with met @RonWyden's HLA Rebecca Nathanson and Liam !!! It was a great meeting and an office full of personality!! #NothingAboutUsWithoutUs #womenmatter #AIDSWATCH pic.twitter.com/XDVe7wKot5
>
> — Brandi Velasquez (@B_urownadvocate) April 2, 2019

> Glad to be with @SenDougJones' staff this morning discussing the needs around HIV care & prevention in Alabama! #AIDSWatch #ALPolitics pic.twitter.com/vOxgv3d989

— Landon Lee Nichols (@LandonLeeN) April 2, 2019

"This year, we're calling on our elected leaders to once and for all commit to ending the HIV epidemic. We have the science and tools to turn this dream into a reality, but it must be met by a strong federal commitment and investment in the strategies that will make HIV history in all communities across the United States," said AIDS United president and CEO Jesse Milan Jr. in a press release. AIDS United organizes the annual event, now in its 26th year, along with the Treatment Access Expansion Project and the US People Living with HIV Caucus. The presenting sponsor is The Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation (ETAF).

Advocating during #AIDSWatch 2019, and House & Senate Democratic members are supporting access to health care for all Americans in front of #SCOTUS by defending #ACA against efforts to dismantle it. Ending #HIV epidemic requires quality, affordable, comprehensive care for all. pic.twitter.com/uquUZZ7Aua

— HIV Medicine Association (@HIVMA) April 2, 2019

"AIDSWatch," continued Milan, "is our moment to seize this historic opportunity and make our voices heard in Congress so that every person has access to the prevention, treatment and care they need and deserve, and we finally make suffering from HIV and AIDS a thing of the past."

The power of people in #hiv advocacy @AIDS_United @uspwn @TheSeroProject @PositivelyTrans @tommysadancer pic.twitter.com/WtNpdhOIG2

— Andrew Spieldenner (@Aspield) April 1, 2019

AIDSWatch is also a time to honor advocates and lawmakers who have been leaders in the fight. This year's AIDSWatch Congressional Champion Award went to Congressman Elijah Cummings (D–Md.), a 13-term representative for Maryland's 7th congressional district, and the ETAF Legislative Leadership Award was presented to Congresswoman Karen Bass (D–Calif.), representative for California's 37th congressional district.

Positive Leadership Awards were presented to:

- Marco Castro-Bojorquez, the founder at HIVenas Abiertas, a network of Latinx immigrants living with HIV, and a member of the US People Living with HIV Caucus

- Dee Dee Chamblee, the executive director of LaGender, Inc. and a member of the Positively Trans national advisory board

- Richard Hutchinson Jr., the YMSM (young men who have sex with men) program specialist at NAESM (National AIDS Education & Services for Minorities) and cofounder of the He is Valuable Project, a social movement empowering Black queer men to mobilize around the HIV epidemic and other social justice and health issues.

Congratulations to @Bojorquez for being awarded the #AIDSWatch Positive Leadership Award by @HIVCaucus! pic.twitter.com/jTy08P51Zy

— AIDS United (@AIDS_United) April 1, 2019

Congratulations to Ms Dee Dee of @LagenderInc for being awarded the AIDSWatch Positive Leadership Award. Thank you for your leadership!

pic.twitter.com/E1N7gPlbts

— AIDS United (@AIDS_United) April 1, 2019

Congratulations Richard Hutchinson for being recognized for your tireless #hiv advocacy! #AIDSWatch pic.twitter.com/ex0sI2yiNB

— AIDS United (@AIDS_United) April 1, 2019

To read AIDS United's policy blog in POZ, including a statement about the Trump administration's recent attempt to legally strike down the entire Affordable Care Act, click here. And for more posts like the ones in this article, search #AIDSWatch on social media.

BREAKING: #HIV advocates call on @CDCDirector on not enforcing its patent rights for #PrEP #AIDSWatch2019 pic.twitter.com/9PS17mjpTm

— TAG Team (@TAGTeam_Tweets) April 1, 2019

Our president & CEO @JesseMilanJr is on Capitol Hill today to speak truth to power! #endHIV #AIDSWatch pic.twitter.com/cg87zb1Rys

— AIDS United (@AIDS_United) April 2, 2019

Check out highlights from this year’s AIDSWatch in our new moment ⚡ “#AIDSWatch 2019”https://t.co/4KdAHmrpXH

— AIDS United (@AIDS_United) April 2, 2019

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