



R.I.P. Cornelius Baker, Longtime HIV Advocate

He was an esteemed HIV policy expert.

January 6, 2025 By [Trent Straube](#)

Cornelius Baker, a beloved HIV policy expert and longtime activist for Black gay men, died unexpectedly of natural causes at his home on November 9, reports the Washington Blade. His career encompassed a who's who of federal and national organizations, including the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the National Institutes of Health, the Whitman-Walker Clinic, the Rollins School of Public Health, the National Association of People with AIDS and The Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation (ETAF). He was also a member of the POZ Advisory Board.

"A. Cornelius Baker stood with our founder, Elizabeth Taylor, at the beginning of the HIV/AIDS movement and throughout her legacy," wrote ETAF. "The ETAF officers and staff team join his family, friends and community as we mourn his loss together. We find comfort in knowing that his spirit, along with Elizabeth's, will continue to guide and inspire us and the entire HIV/AIDS movement in our ongoing work."

"Cornelius was a fierce fighter and educator whose influence was felt worldwide," wrote Harold Phillips, the deputy director of programs at NMAC. "He used his lived experience as a Black gay man living with HIV and his knowledge to make the world a better place for people with HIV across the world. His work reflected faith in action. He saw our humanity and the potential in many of us. Cornelius pushed us to be better and act on behalf of those often cast aside. He also spent many nights making us laugh and smile while developing strategy, policy and actions to influence everything from the HIV research to Ryan White Reauthorization, to PEPFAR implementation and reauthorization. He met with federal officials and community members. He marched and testified before the city council to the halls of Congress.

"A friend put it best, 'Cornelius was like a river that ran through many lands.' Just like a river, he helped shape so many of us and left us changed. We are grateful and will continue his legacy and the work. Rest In Power."

