Trump Signs Law Renewing Global AIDS Funding for PEPFAR

The program has saved at least a million lives, despite the White House's increased efforts to undermine it.

December 19, 2018 By Trent Straube

Trump signed a bill reauthorizing the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) until 2023, reports VOX. Founded in 2003 under the direction of President George W. Bush, the program provides billions of dollars in global HIV/AIDS funding and enjoys bipartisan support.

PEPFAR supports more than 14 million people on HIV treatment. The program has facilitated the birth of more than 2.2 million HIV-free babies to mothers living with the virus and the voluntary medical male circumcision of more than 15.2 million men and boys (the procedure helps protect against contracting HIV). According to POZ reporting earlier this year on the 15th anniversary of PEPFAR, the program has placed as many as 13 high-HIV-burden countries on the path to achieving control of the epidemic by 2020.

As VOX points out, PEPFAR has prevented at least 1.2 million deaths, and plenty of less direct evidence suggests that the program is saving millions of lives.

The current White House's support of PEPFAR is not without caveats. As POZ previously reported in "Trump Administration Policies Undermine the Global HIV Response," the administration has reinstated and expanded the Mexico City Policy, now called "Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance." This policy prohibits U.S. funding for groups that use non-U.S. sources of money in efforts to decriminalize abortion, expand abortion services or provide abortion counseling or referrals.

What's more, PEPFAR has funded abstinence-only programs and other policies not based on evidence.

PEPFAR had previously been renewed in 2008 and 2013.

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