Biden Leans Into Obama Era Policies to End the HIV Epidemic

The campaign of the presumptive Democratic nominee responds to the 2020 Presidential Candidate HIV Questionnaire.

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The 2020 presidential candidates are uniquely positioned to make history in the fight to end the HIV epidemic.

We have the tools and knowledge to end the HIV epidemic. Scientific advances and groundbreaking HIV research have shown that it is not only possible for people to live long, healthy lives with HIV, but that people who have achieved (and maintain) an undetectable viral load cannot transmit the virus to others.

This knowledge is powerful, but knowledge alone is not enough.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic and the inability of the United States to effectively stem its spread has revealed vast and widening cracks in our nation's public health infrastructure. At the same time, a series of extrajudicial executions of Black people by law enforcement has ignited a nationwide movement in opposition to long-standing systemic racism that applies just as well to public health as it does to policing. We are at a turning point as a nation, both in terms of our response to the HIV epidemic and how we address these three dovetailing and devastating crises.

To better understand the presidential candidates' responses to the HIV epidemic and the myriad public health crises that face our nation in 2020, a coalition of more than 50 organizations led by AIDS United and the Act Now End AIDS Coalition sent a survey to all of the candidates who were running for president.

President Donald Trump's campaign didn't fill out the questionnaire, but instead pointed us toward the president's Ending the HIV Epidemic initiative. We now share the responses of Vice President Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic nominee for president.

We at AIDS United view these questionnaire responses not as an end unto themselves, but as the beginning of a broader and more in-depth discussion. It is our hope that this will not just inform people, but also spark a dialogue within the HIV community on the merits and shortcomings of the candidates' approaches to ending the HIV epidemic. We will need to ensure that whoever wins the

2020 presidential election is doing everything possible to meet the magnitude of this moment.

Here are some excerpts from the Biden campaign's response to the 2020 Presidential Candidate HIV Questionnaire:

On his administration's plan to end the HIV epidemic:

> "I will update and implement the Obama-Biden Administration's comprehensive National HIV/AIDS Strategy … [and] I re-commit to ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic by 2025. Updating the nation's comprehensive HIV/AIDS strategy will aggressively reduce new HIV cases, while increasing access to treatment and eliminating inequitable access to services and supports."

On the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program:

> "The Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program has long been crucial to ensuring that people living with HIV achieve better health outcomes and can afford treatment and care … I will fully fund the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program, ensuring that it remains focused on providing care and treatment to those already living with HIV, and will increase federal funding for HIV/AIDS research. When and where appropriate, I will also ensure that the program continues to be strengthened and adapted to care providers' needs, as has been done through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) HIV/AIDS Bureau."

On expanding access to health care and the Affordable Care Act:

> "Passing Obamacare was a huge step forward in expanding access to affordable, quality health care — especially for LGBTQ+ Americans. But, every day over the past ten years, the Affordable Care Act has been under relentless attack. I oppose every effort to get rid of this historic law — including efforts by Republicans, and efforts by Democrats. Instead of starting from scratch and getting rid of private insurance, I have a plan to build on the Affordable Care Act by giving Americans more choice, reducing health care costs, and making our health care system less complex to navigate. My plan will ensure every single American has access to affordable, quality health insurance and specifically help LGBTQ+ Americans. My plan takes a number of steps to build on Obamacare, including allowing Americans who are uninsured or who don't like their coverage to buy into a Medicare-like public option."

On addressing the overdose epidemic and HIV transmission through injection drug use:

> "To deal with the immense scope of the opioid and substance use disorder crisis, I will dramatically scale up the resources available, with an unprecedented investment of $125 billion over ten years. Funds will be used to pursue comprehensive strategies to expand access to treatment, particularly in rural and urban communities with high rates of substance use disorders and a lack of access to substance use disorder treatment services … Local communities will be able to use the funds to implement evidence-based programs designed to stop the spread of diseases like hepatitis C and HIV, including syringe service programs."

On access to HIV medications, including for PrEP:

> “I will ensure that LGBTQ+ individuals have full access to all appropriate health care treatments and resources, including covering HIV treatment and prevention. I will ensure that federal health plans provide coverage for PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) and PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) — lifesaving, highly effective HIV prevention medications. Fortunately, thanks to a recommendation by the U.S. Preventive Task Force (USPSTF), PrEP must be covered without cost-sharing starting in 2021. I will ensure other costs, including for lab and clinical services, are covered.”

You can view the entire survey here.

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/blog/biden-leans-obama-era-policies-end-hiv-epidemic