



Did I Make You Gasp?

It is important to understand the HIV budget cuts have nothing to do with the effectiveness of programs and services.

July 18, 2023 By [Paul Kawata](#)

Last week the House dropped their FY 2024 federal budget recommendations. The breadth and depth of the cuts were shocking. Here is what we know, and the information is still changing.

- * \$3.8 billion cut to NIH
- * \$220 million cut to CDC (eliminating EHE funding)
- * \$238 million cut to HRSA (eliminating EHE & Part F support)
- * \$32 million cut to the Minority AIDS Initiative
- * Eliminate all SAMHSA MAI support
- * Eliminate all Title X and Teen Pregnancy Prevention programs
- * \$6 million increase to HOPWA

In addition to the cuts in the budget there were also riders:

- * Prohibits the use of funds to promote or advance Critical Race Theory (CRT).
- * Prohibits implementation of the Biden Administration's Executive Orders on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI).
- * Prohibits funds to enforce Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria for investing in retirement plans.
- * Protects Americans against religious discrimination related to their views on marriage.
- * Prohibits implementation of other controversial Biden Administration rules and Executive Orders, such as student loan repayment waivers and rules enforcing "gender identity" that require biological boys to be allowed to compete against girls in women's sports.
- * Includes a new private right of action to ensure that individuals who believe their conscience rights under the Weldon Amendment have been violated can have their complaint heard and adjudicated by a court, rather than the biased Biden Administration Office for Civil Rights at HHS.
- * Maintains the Dickey Amendment, which ensures that federal funds cannot be used to advocate or promote gun control.
- * Protects religious freedom of students on college campuses with language that ensures religious

student groups are treated equally and not discriminated against in access to campus facilities or recognition.

- * Prohibits the use of funds to perform medical procedures that attempt to change an individual's biological gender.

- * Prohibits implementation of Biden Executive Order on Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Discrimination.

The HIV movement needs the Senate and the White House to push back and hold the line for at least a continuing resolution (CR). Unfortunately, to raise the debt ceiling, the administration agreed to several "poison pills" including that non-defense discretionary spending would be set at one percent below current year levels if a budget is not passed. However, a 1% decrease is better than the cuts recommended by the House.

I believe the stunning \$3.8 billion cut to NIH is payback from select House members against Dr. Fauci, even though he retired. It has nothing to do with NIH or the need for a strong research infrastructure. In fact, this cut will make America more vulnerable the next time a new virus spreads across the world. And there will be a next time.

It is important to understand the HIV budget cuts have nothing to do with the effectiveness of programs and services and everything to do with the communities hardest hit by HIV. We are an extension of the culture wars playing out in America. After Braidwood and Tennessee, no one should be surprised. I hope the House overplayed their hand with these cuts and riders, but a lot depends on our next steps.

Normally staying quiet is the best strategy to survive in Washington. It's been used by the HIV movement with much success. When the fight is specifically about our funding and the communities we serve, then the way forward is less clear. Whether we like it or not, between the communities we serve and our dependence on government funding, our movement is in the crosshairs. I don't recall a time when there was so much HIV funding at risk.

Every organization needs to figure out their own strategy. I'm sharing NMAC's to keep the field informed. Abortions, homosexuality, people of trans experience, affirmative action, gun control, and civil rights are bad in their eyes. Overturning Roe opened to doors to re-litigate what most thought was settled. This is the "make America great again" strategy in real time.

Did I make you gasp?

I'm calling an All-Hands-on Deck discussion at NMAC with our staff, board, consultants, and partners. The Partnership to End the Epidemics talked on Friday with the White House. We need their leadership in this fight. The Federal AIDS Policy Partnership held an emergency call to share information and talk strategy. These attempts to cut HIV funding won't stop. Like with reproductive health, their goal is to completely defund HIV prevention, care, and research using the arguments outlined in the Braidwood case. It is against their religious beliefs, and they want to end public support for homosexual sex.

Fortunately, the HIV movement includes multiple Washington based policy staff from multiple national organizations who daily fight for more funding and to stop negative amendments. This will be a test of our ability to work together with the Senate, White House, and community. Collectively we've changed the world; however, I've seen people do some crazy things in the name of God. With the President election next year, this really is turning into a fight for the soul of this country.

Yours in the struggle,

Paul Kawata

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