



Nearly 500 HIV Advocates Gather in DC for AIDSWatch 2024

HIV advocates convened over 240 meetings with congressional leaders during the annual AIDSWatch.

April 1, 2024 By [AIDS United](#)

WASHINGTON, D.C. – March 22nd, 2024 — Nearly 500 advocates from 35 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia gathered in Washington, DC, for AIDSWatch 2024—the longest-running and largest constituent-led HIV federal advocacy convening in the nation. Advocates rallied on the lawn of the U.S. Capitol before convening over 240 meetings with congressional leaders about national-level policies that will help end the HIV epidemic.

"As part of American democracy, we understand how important it is, that we vote and who we vote for. And it's...

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Speakers led the advocates through morning remarks from AIDS United President & CEO Jesse Milan, Jr.; Keiva Lei K. Cadena, Co-Executive Director of Positive Women's Network; Naomi Wilding and Laela Wilding—grandchildren of the late actress and outspoken HIV/AIDS Activist Elizabeth Taylor; actors John Roberts and Daniel Franzese; and Martha Sichone Cameron, Vice Chair of the U.S. People Living with HIV Caucus.

During the rally, Cameron spoke to the advocates sharing, "Your most powerful tool is your story. Among us we have thousands of years of lived experience with HIV, nobody else can tell our story, nobody else. You have a PhD in your HIV story and that is all you need today, make sure they hear your story, make sure you tell the story of those that are not here with us today."

Since its inception 31 years ago, AIDSWatch has evolved into the nation's most impactful HIV advocacy event, bringing together diverse voices to amplify community-led policy priorities. The

theme of this year's event — “We’re in This Together” — underscores the importance of collective action between people living with and impacted by HIV and congressional leaders to end the epidemic in the United States by 2030. Throughout the three-day convening, participants engaged in 19 constituent-led workshops and institutes geared towards preparing advocates to share their stories and become familiar with the policy priorities.

Key highlights of AIDSWatch 2024 included:

- The AIDSWatch Welcome Reception, where the U.S. People Living with HIV Caucus honored community leader Timothy S. Jackson of the AIDS Foundation Chicago with the annual Persistent Advocate Award.
- The Opening Plenary featured opening remarks from Carole Johnson, Administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), and a fireside chat on HIV and Health Equity leaders led by AIDS United Board Chair and former Director of the CDC’s Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention Dr. Eugene McCray, M.D.
- The AIDSWatch Congressional Awards Reception, hosted by Congresswoman Barbara Lee, recognized advocates’ exemplary leadership via the U.S. People Living with HIV Caucus’ Castro Bojorquez Positive Leadership awards, which were presented to Tez Anderson, Tiommi Luckett, and Harold Phillips, the previous Director of the Office of National AIDS Policy. In addition, Representative Nikema Williams, Senator Tammy Baldwin, and Representative Bonnie Watson Coleman were presented with the Congressional Leadership Awards.
- The AIDSWatch Rally and Hill Day, where 440 advocates rallied on Capitol Hill before engaging in over 240 advocacy meetings with congressional lawmakers on critical HIV policy priorities.

AIDSWatch is presented by AIDS United in partnership with the U.S. People Living with HIV Caucus (the HIV Caucus) and the Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation. Advocacy champions Gilead Sciences, Merck, and The Elizabeth Taylor Foundation provided major support for the event.

For more information on AIDSWatch 2024 and to access resources and policy priorities, please visit www.aidsunited.org/aidswatch.

[This press release](#) originally appeared on AIDSUnited.org.

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