Progress on Congressional Funding for 2020 Slows to a Crawl

HIV programs such as housing and syringe exchanges could be on the chopping block as the November 21 deadline looms. Here's what you can do.

November 8, 2019 By AIDS United

With only eight full legislative days left for Congress before the current continuing resolution (CR) expires on November 21, lawmakers have still yet to reach a deal for funding the federal government in 2020. Disagreements on funding levels—particularly for contentious, partisan priorities such as the president's border wall—remain; the necessity of a further CR, funding the government at extended fiscal year 2019 levels, is highly likely, with a new expiration date to be set sometime between mid and late December.

Last week, the Senate passed the first of their funding bills in a "minibus" containing funding for the Agriculture-FDA, Commerce-Justice-Science, Interior-Environment, and Transportation-Housing & Urban Development (T-HUD) departments. Of particular interest to HIV advocates in this bill is the Housing for People with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) program. Senate appropriators joined the Trump administration in suggesting a slash to HOPWA funding of $63 million, funding the program at just $330 million. It is vital that the Senate follow the lead of their House counterparts to fund HOPWA at $410 million in their final spending package.

Further, in the Senate's not-yet-introduced Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (L-HHS) bill, HIV-specific programs are funded at levels consistent with the president's budget request, but below what the House proposed in their version of the L-HHS bill. The Senate also maintains a harmful ban on the purchase of syringes using federal dollars by syringe services programs. As a first point of connection to care for many people who inject drugs, SSPs are a critical aspect of ending the HIV epidemic, and it is crucial that Congress remove this ideologically driven policy rider to move us closer to doing so.

AIDS United will be working with aligned organizations and allies in Congress to ensure final appropriations bills provide full funding and do not limit HIV prevention tools, but your voice is needed to help. Fill out AIDS United's action alert to write to your legislators, telling them to protect HIV programmatic funding and policy priorities!

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