



A Seasonal Message to the HIV Community From AIDS United

“Hold onto your practice of hope, even when it feels stretched thin,” writes AIDS United CEO Carl Baloney Jr.

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This time of year always brings mixed emotions — the weight of the world, the urgency of our work, and the realities our communities face every day. In moments like this, hope can feel fragile. And yet, it remains one of the strongest tools we have.

I often come back to the idea that [hope is a discipline](#). It asks us to stay honest about the world as it is, and courageous enough to imagine what it could be. As [Mariame Kaba](#) reminds us, hope takes intention — “to be clear-eyed, to put in energy, to hold fast to your vision.” And that practice matters most when conditions feel uncertain or heavy.

Over the past year, our staff have embodied that discipline in ways big and small. They’ve carried complex work, navigated shifting political winds, supported one another, and stayed rooted in the mission even as the world around us has felt unsteady. Their commitment, creativity, and heart are part of what keeps this movement alive.

And within that collective strength, I want to lift up the leadership of Dr. Athena Cross. Athena doesn’t just believe in the discipline of hope — she models it with clarity, compassion, and unwavering purpose. Through her openness and her steadiness, she helps people reconnect with their own capacity and reminds us all what’s possible when we lead with humanity. She is a reminder that hope not only sustains us — it multiplies.

As we move into a season meant for rest and reflection, I hope you give yourself the space to breathe. Burnout is real, and the work will still be here tomorrow.

Hold onto your practice of hope, even when it feels stretched thin. [Celebrate your wins — no matter how small or fleeting they may seem](#). They are fuel for what comes next.

With respect, gratitude, and hope,

Carl Baloney, Jr.

President & CEO at AIDS United

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