



Weathering the Storm Together

Trump administration executive orders targeting gender identity and migrant status require courage, solidarity, and our COLLECTIVE ACTION.

January 22, 2025 By [Zero HIV Stigma](#)

The HIV community has confronted stigma and discrimination for more than four decades. Yet, this week's Trump administration executive orders targeting transgender individuals, migrants, and other marginalized groups are igniting feelings of anger, anxiety, despair, fear, and frustration. The executive orders will deepen systemic inequities and threaten the fragile progress made towards protecting the human rights of all Americans and those who seek safe harbor in the United States.

For transgender individuals, restrictions on rights and recognition, making them legally invisible in the United States, will amplify barriers to accessing gender-affirming care and exacerbate stigma. For migrants, punitive policies on residency and asylum will create additional challenges for those already navigating precarious health systems. These measures reverberate through the HIV community, disproportionately affecting those already marginalized due to intersectional layers of identity, socioeconomic status, or citizenship.

The mental health toll of these executive orders cannot be overstated. Anger and frustration arise from a sense of betrayal, as the government's role should be to protect – not marginalize – its citizens and residents. Anxiety and despair set in when individuals wonder how these actions will affect their ability to access life-saving medications, supportive services, and safe spaces. Fear looms large for those at risk of losing employment, housing, or legal protections, while frustration grows as communities confront these recurring battles in an era that should be defined by progress towards realizing the rights to dignity, health, and wellbeing.

In the face of the challenges these and future executive orders may pose, the path forward lies in our collective action and solidarity. To navigate the shoals ahead, we must first reaffirm our commitment to each other. Peer support networks are vital in helping individuals cope with feelings of isolation and hopelessness. Sharing personal stories, resources, and strategies will also be important to strengthen our resilience and remind us that no one is alone in this struggle – notably as we witness attempts to divide and isolate our most vulnerable communities.

Community-based health and advocacy organizations – within and allied to the HIV community – must also play a role in providing safe spaces for dialogue and mobilization, noting that in certain instances the issues with which we are contending are complex and nuanced. From hosting community forums to providing advocacy and communication support, these organizations are

lifelines in these turbulent times. Importantly, they can channel collective energy into actionable strategies – whether through legal advocacy, public education campaigns, or policy engagement – to challenge harmful decisions and demand accountability.

The HIV community must also build and sustain broader alliances with other movements advocating social justice. As we know too well from the HIV movement, gender rights, immigrant rights, racial equity, and social justice are all interconnected. By standing together, we amplify our voices and strengthen our impact. Advocacy at the intersection of these issues not only addresses immediate threats but also promotes a more inclusive society where every individual's rights and health are valued, and everyone has a place at the table.

Finally, self-care and community care are essential. This moment calls for a balance of action and rest, ensuring that we preserve our strength for the long road ahead through to the upcoming 2026 mid-terms and the next presidential election. As activists, community leaders, and healthcare providers, we must prioritize our well-being while continuing to champion the rights of those we serve, including those who find themselves under assault today and into the future.

The current climate demands courage and solidarity. By supporting one another and working collectively, we can weather these storms and continue the fight for a world where dignity, health, and wellbeing are universal rights, not privileges for the elite few. The HIV community has always weathered storms together – and together, we will overcome once more.

This Zero HIV Stigma blog was written by Dr. José M. Zuniga, who is President/CEO of the International Association of Providers of AIDS Care (@IAPAC) and the Fast-Track Cities Institute (@FTC2030).