

David Ernesto Munar Is the New CEO of Ohio-Based Equitas Health

Equitas Health serves HIV and LGBTQ people across four states. Munar understands their needs. A gay Latino, he tested positive in 1994.

April 5, 2024 By [Trent Straube](#)

Longtime HIV advocate and leader David Ernesto Munar is the new chief executive director of Equitas Health, a nonprofit community health care organization based in Ohio that serves [LGBTQ](#) and [HIV](#) people across four states. He took over the role on April 1, [according to an Equitas statement](#).

For the previous 10 years, [Munar had led Howard Brown Health](#), serving as president and CEO of the Chicago-based HIV and LGBTQ health care organization. A gay Colombian American, he has also advocated for the [Latino](#) community; he was inducted into the [Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame in 2010](#).

Munar has decades of firsthand experience in the HIV health care sector, including serving as president and CEO of AIDS Foundation of Chicago. He first became involved with Howard Brown Health in 1994 when he tested HIV positive at one of its clinics.

Equitas Health is thrilled to announce our new Chief Executive Officer, David Ernesto Munar! With more than 30 years of...

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Equitas Health was honored last year in the annual POZ 100, which celebrated the organizations, agencies, networks and initiatives that work to end the HIV epidemic. To read that feature, see [The 2023 POZ 100](#). The Equitas write-up read:

This Columbus, Ohio-based nonprofit community health care system is one of the nation's largest organizations catering to the LGBTQ and HIV communities, providing services to tens of thousands of people in Ohio, Texas, Kentucky and West Virginia. Founded in 1984, it offers primary and specialized medical care, a pharmacy, dentistry, mental health and recovery services, HIV and STI treatment and prevention, access to PrEP [pre-exposure prophylaxis] and PEP [post-exposure prophylaxis], Ryan White HIV case management and advocacy and other community health initiatives. The Equitas Health Institute also offers training—online and in person—to organizations interested in creating more affirming environments for LGBTQ people. Equitas Health is the producer and primary beneficiary of AIDS Walk Ohio, which in the past eight years has raised \$2 million for HIV-related services.

“Equitas Health carries a 40-year legacy of serving and advocating for the health and well-being of the LGBTQ+ community, people living with and affected by HIV, and anyone left out or kept out of traditional health care systems,” Kaarina Ornelas, chair of the Equitas Health Board of Trustees, said in a statement announcing Munar’s new position. “David is a passionate leader who will help strengthen and grow the services we provide to preserve that legacy. We are confident that David’s unique experiences and perspectives will help us enhance our standard of care and engagement on the issues that impact access to care for the communities we serve. We couldn’t be more excited to welcome him to Equitas Health.”

Munar replaced Robert Copeland, who stepped down as interim CEO in June, leaving a four-person leadership council to take over operations, [according to The Columbus Dispatch](#), which noted that the previous permanent CEO, Bill Hardy, stepped down in October 2021 following a report by the newspaper that detailed claims of racial discrimination at Equitas.

Launched in 1984, Equitas served over 15,000 clients in 2022 and employed nearly 600 people, [according to its 2022 annual report](#). It has 22 offices in 13 cities, according to the Dispatch.

“I am honored for this chance to lead Equitas Health and work alongside its talented team and dedicated community partners,” Munar said in a statement. “This organization fills a crucial role in the health care landscape. I look forward to exploring opportunities that will increase access to care for the communities we serve. Equitas Health will continue to champion their interests as we galvanize support for more compassionate and culturally competent health care across Ohio.”