TuSalud

Jill Biden Visits HIV Shelter in Panama, Announces $80.9M in AIDS Funds

The U.S. funding arrives from PEPFAR and goes to the Americas; $12.2 million is being directed to HIV services in Panama.

May 25, 2022 By Trent Straube

While in Panama during a Latin America tour to promote unity and partnerships with the United States, First Lady Jill Biden announced that the region would receive $80.9 million in U.S. AIDS funding, including $12.2 million specifically to expand HIV services in Panama.

The funding will arrive from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), according to CNN. President George W. Bush established PEPFAR in 2003. Although it fights HIV globally, it's best known for the billions in AIDS funds it has directed to Africa, saving nearly 20 million lives and preventing millions of infections.

> Here in Panama today, Dr. Quintero, Nandin, Raul and Ricardo shared their personal journeys of living with HIV and their fight for equitable health care.
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> pic.twitter.com/uKZiBHW5pN
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> — Jill Biden (@FLOTUS) May 22, 2022

While in Panama, the first lady stopped at an HIV shelter funded by PEPFAR. She participated in a roundtable and listened to stories from people living with the virus. In a series of tweets about the visit, Biden wrote:

"Here in Panama today, Dr. Quintero, Nandin, Raul and Ricardo shared their personal journeys of living with HIV and their fight for equitable health care.

"For many Panamanians, seeking treatment comes with a fear of discrimination. Regardless of

race, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability, it is my hope that any individual can access the HIV/AIDS services needed no matter where they are in the world.

“Today, the United States announced plans to provide $80.9 million in new @PEPFAR funding to the Americas, including $12.2 million to expand access to HIV treatment in Panama. We must continue to work to reduce the stigma and barriers to equitable HIV/AIDS treatment globally.”

Biden also made stops in Ecuador and Costa Rica to bolster relationships with those countries and to assure them that the United States supports their efforts to overcome corruption, violence and poverty, reported CNN.

The first lady’s visit arrives amid continued immigration controversies in the United States. Many politicians want to stop the influx of immigrants, and a federal judge recently struck down Presiden Joe Biden’s attempt to end Trump-era restrictions at the Mexico–U.S. border. In this political context, Jill Biden’s message, CNN added, seemed to be “stay where you are and reap the benefits of a U.S. relationship.”

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We must continue to work to reduce the stigma and barriers to equitable HIV/AIDS treatment globally. pic.twitter.com/h2818XhjwO

— Jill Biden (@FLOTUS) May 22, 2022

In recent years, the United States has sent HIV meds and aid to countries in northern Latin America. In 2019, over 4 million Venezuelans fled the country to neighboring nations because of economic and political upheaval. Specifically, Venezuelans with HIV reported that the government kept their lifesaving meds locked up and that police had raided HIV services organizations, taking their antiretrovirals and infant formula. For more, see “U.S. to Send 12,000 Doses of HIV Meds to Venezuelans in Colombia.”

In related news, PEPFAR has worked with other global AIDS groups to help Ukrainians who have HIV. For more, see “U.S. Provides $13M in HIV Meds and Services to Ukraine.”

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