TuSalud

“Real Housewives” Bring the Drama to DC as They Fight for HIV Funds

Organized by MISTR, which provides PrEP to prevent HIV, “Housewives on the Hill” addressed HIV funding cuts to programs like ADAP.

March 24, 2026 By Trent Straube

The stars of the Real Housewives reality TV franchise know how to raise their voices and garner national attention. Last week, they used those skills to advocate for folks living with and at risk for HIV. For “Housewives on the Hill,” an event spearheaded by telehealth HIV prevention provider MISTR, several housewives gathered in Washington, DC, to raise the alarm about funding cuts to HIV programs, such as the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) and the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program.

“We partnered with the Housewives because they’re real housewives from real communities across the country that are affected by HIV,” said MISTR CEO Tristan Schukraft. “They’ve got a platform, and they’ve got a voice. So we’re going to leverage those platforms and voices to bring awareness to HIV.”

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Housewife participants at the Capitol gathering included Candiace Dillard Bassett (Potomac), Melissa Gorga (New Jersey), Erika Jayne (Beverly Hills), NeNe Leakes and Phaedra Parks (both of Atlanta), Luann de Lesseps (New York City) and Marysol Patton (Miami).

You can watch several videos of the housewives speaking about HIV on MISTR's Instagram page @heymistr.

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The housewives addressed the media and members of Congress, highlighting the developing crisis in HIV funding in the United States. Indeed, several states—including Delaware, Florida, Kansas, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island—say they're forced to restrict eligibility to cost-free HIV programs, remove medications that are covered and roll back insurance assistance programs, reports KFF.

In Florida, for example, over 15,000 people receiving HIV meds via ADAP were expected to lose access to treatment, according to an announcement from the state's health department in January. In recent weeks, access to ADAP seems to have been restored, though the fight for coverage of the popular med Biktarvy continues.

The proposed cuts and last-minute changes have given rise to uncertainty across the state, said

Patton, of Miami, at the DC event, according to The 19th. Patton was one of the six original cast members in season 1 of The Real Housewives of Miami. “When programs like ADAP are weakened,” she added, “working-class people can’t access this treatment.”



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The funding cuts also affect access to pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP, which is available to HIV-negative people as pills and long-acting injectables to prevent HIV.

MISTR is one of the nation’s premier providers of PrEP, primarily via telehealth. In fact, one in five PrEP users nationwide (110,000 out of 580,000) received their meds online through MISTR last year.

“It’s important to remind everyone in Washington that HIV is still an epidemic,” MISTR’s Schukraft said. “Over a hundred people every day are getting HIV in the United States, and it doesn’t have to be that way. We have the science [to end the epidemic], so it’s really about access and prevention and making sure those who are positive stay virally suppressed. And we can do it.... Working together with the government we can achieve great things.”

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Schukraft outlined three goals of the DC event: to preserve funding for HIV prevention and care, to fully support President Trump's Ending the HIV Epidemic initiative, which he launched in his first term, and to leverage telemedicine to reach more people.

To date, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved four forms of PrEP: Truvada and Descovy are daily pills; Apretude is a shot given every two months; and Yeztugo is a twice-yearly injectable that is highly effective in women, gay men and gender-diverse populations. (Due to insufficient evidence, Descovy is not yet indicated as PrEP for cisgender women and trans men.) Generic—and much cheaper—versions of Truvada are available. To learn more about PrEP, see the POZ Basics on HIV Prevention: Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP).

Under the rules of the Affordable Care Act (ACA, or Obamacare), health insurers must cover preventive health services that receive an A or B grade from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF). In August 2023, the USPSTF gave an A grade to all three forms of PrEP that had then been approved: Truvada, Descovy and Apretude. (Yeztugo, also known as lenacapavir, was approved in 2025, and advocates urge health insurers to cover it as well.)

In recent years, conservatives have filed lawsuits challenging the ACA's mandate to cover preventive health services. These include not just PrEP but also cholesterol-lowering statins, vaccines and many screenings for cancer, diabetes and hepatitis.

In June 2025, the Supreme Court upheld the ACA mandate to cover these preventive services but stressed that the task force falls under the leadership of the nation's health secretary. Currently, that person is Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who is already dismantling federal health programs and services. He recently removed members of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), a panel of experts that sets U.S. vaccine policy. As a result, the future of the USPSTF and PrEP insurance coverage remains unclear.



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About 1.2 million people are living with HIV in the United States, and an estimated 13% of them don’t know they are positive. What’s more, nearly 40% of new HIV cases are transmitted by people who don’t know they have the virus.

People with HIV who achieve and maintain viral suppression experience slower disease progression, enjoy better overall health and are less likely to develop opportunistic illnesses. What’s more, people with an undetectable viral load don’t transmit HIV to others via sex. This is known as treatment as prevention, or Undetectable Equals Untransmittable (U=U).

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