

# Recognizing the Progress of the Black Community's Fight Against HIV

Reps. Pocan (WI-02), Watson Coleman (NJ-12) and Kelly (IL-02) recognize National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. #NBHAAD

February 7, 2025 By Mark Pocan, Robin Kelly and Bonnie Watson Coleman

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Today marks the 26th annual National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (#NBHAAD). The Congressional HIV/AIDS Caucus and Congressional leaders recognize this day to help increase HIV awareness and enhance prevention, testing, and treatment among Black Americans.

This day comes at a critical time for our country as we work to reduce new cases and end the HIV epidemic by 2030, a goal established under the first Trump Administration.

There is hope thanks to federally-funded programs that improve the lives of Black communities across America. The Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program, in which 45% of patients identify as Black/African American, has led 90% of patients to viral suppression, preventing further transmission and keeping our communities healthy. Between 2018 and 2022, new infections among Black gay and bisexual men declined 16% after several years of stagnation.

However, the Trump Administration has chosen to freeze some of these lifesaving programs and has cut off essential services, including HIV treatment through PEPFAR and USAID across the globe. Doing so will reverse the progress we have made in combating the HIV epidemic and will have devastating consequences for all Americans, particularly for Black communities.

“We cannot turn our backs when our national prevention efforts are finally having an impact on the number of new infections for Black communities. This ongoing crisis has underscored the systemic inequities people living with HIV and AIDS face in accessing healthcare. Now is the time for the government to fulfill its commitment to ending the HIV epidemic, not for the Trump Administration to halt critical care programs and put peoples’ lives at risk.” — Congressman Mark Pocan (WI-02), Chair of the Congressional HIV/AIDS Caucus

“The disparity in HIV/AIDS incidence among the Black community is a crucial issue that demands urgent action. Federally-funded programs have played a key role in addressing this crisis, saving tens of millions of lives and having the potential to save millions more. We cannot allow the Trump Administration’s potential freezing of funds to undermine the progress that we’ve made thus far. Ending the HIV epidemic by 2030 is achievable, but only if we commit to securing the support that

these underrepresented communities need.” — Congresswoman Robin Kelly (IL-02), CBC Health Braintrust Chairwoman

“For decades, we have fought to end the HIV epidemic, and thanks to scientific advancements, we now have the tools to make that goal a reality. But these tools alone are not enough — Black communities continue to face disproportionate rates of HIV due to systemic barriers that limit access to prevention, testing, and care,” said Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman (NJ-12). “This is not just a public health crisis—it is a social justice issue. I am grateful to all those working to drive meaningful change in HIV prevention and research. Together, we will continue the work to ensure that the promise of health and dignity reaches every community.

“I have provided HIV prevention and treatment to a majority Black population for nearly two decades witnessing daily the lifesaving benefits of HIV prevention and treatment for those with access to them. PrEP or pre-exposure prophylaxis is an HIV medication that is 99% effective in preventing HIV acquisition and yet too many people in my community and across the country are not able to benefit from it. Nationally — only 14% of Black Americans who could benefit from PrEP have been prescribed it despite making up 39% of new HIV diagnoses. Cutting HIV prevention funding will not only worsen this disparity but increase health care costs as the number of people impacted by HIV increases. By investing in HIV prevention and treatment, we really can end HIV as an epidemic,” said Allison Agwu, MD, ScM, FIDSA, Immediate Past Chair of the HIV Medicine Association.

“Over the last few years, we have seen either level funding or reductions in funding for HIV care and services. The current halt in funding will further disrupt programs that directly assist people living with HIV in Ryan White funded clinics and housing programs administered by HUD. Since Black people are disproportionately impacted by HIV, these cuts represent one more nail in the coffin of Black Americans already experiencing a large number of health disparities, including HIV/AIDS, rooted in racism and discrimination,” states Venita Ray, Chair of the U.S. People Living With HIV Caucus.

Danielle M. Campbell, Founding Member of PrEP in Black America (PIBA), emphasizes, “As HIV-related health gaps widen between Black people and other communities, there is a real opportunity to double down on efforts to center all efforts, policies, and advocacy around Black lives.” Adding to this, Leisha McKinley-Beach, also of PIBA and CEO of the Black Public Health Institute, highlights the potential impact of PrEP: “PrEP can be a game-changer for Black communities, but only when it’s powered by the right forces—Black leadership, research, and access. Without that, it’s just another unused tool, sitting idle in the toolbox.”

As our country observes National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, it is important for Congress and the Administration to recognize the progress of the Black community’s fight against HIV and to continue the Ending the HIV Epidemic initiative by fully funding the nation’s HIV programs.

#SaveHIVFunding

