

This World AIDS Day 2025, the U.S. Stands at a Crossroads in the Fight to End HIV

2026 will determine whether we sustain the struggle or abandon decades of leadership.

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WASHINGTON, DC, December 1, 2025 - On this World AIDS Day, The AIDS Institute honors the lives lost to HIV and the progress won through decades of advocacy, science, and bipartisan commitment. At the same time, the United States currently stands at a crossroads; which direction we take as a nation will determine the future course of our collective fight to end the domestic HIV epidemic.

The AIDS Institute was founded in 1985 as an HIV community service organization to provide assistance to people dying of AIDS. Just trying to ensure that people with HIV had basic needs met as they battled the disease was a daunting task. Forty years later, medical science has given us remarkable tools for transforming HIV into a manageable chronic illness, and for prevention. Sufficient dedicated funding and political will would enable the United States to end the HIV epidemic in this decade.

Yet federal leadership is faltering. This year, the United States government chose not to formally recognize World AIDS Day for the first time in decades — a stark signal of retreat at a moment when commitment is most needed. Key HIV programs face, at best stagnant funding in 2026, and at worst, serious cuts or even elimination. Medicaid cuts enacted earlier this year threaten access to care for the 40% of people with HIV who rely on Medicaid and tens of thousands more people with HIV or vulnerable to HIV who may become uninsured if Congress fails to extend the more generous premium tax credits that have helped so many gain coverage. This is all while leaders are destroying the nation's trust in basic science and public health.

“We are at a crossroads,” said Rachel Klein, deputy executive director of The AIDS Institute. “The question for the coming year is simple. Will federal leaders stand with people living with and at risk of HIV, or turn away just short of the finish line? When leaders underfund HIV programs, threaten the ACA, and make it harder for people to afford and maintain healthcare, they are not just debating policy. They are deciding whether people get the care, medicine, and stability they need to stay alive.”

These policy attacks do the most harm to communities that have always carried the heaviest burden of HIV. Black and Latino communities, LGBTQ+ people, people in the South, immigrants, and people living in poverty already face higher rates of new HIV diagnoses and greater barriers to care. At the same time, a wave of anti LGBTQ+ laws, efforts to curb public health authority, and broader attacks on bodily autonomy are fueling stigma and making it harder to deliver services.

Even as the federal government declined to recognize World AIDS Day this year, communities are not standing down. Across the country, people living with HIV, providers, and advocates are continuing the fight by testing, treating, and preventing HIV every day. They are enrolling people in coverage, navigating insurance barriers, and working to expand access to PrEP, harm reduction, and lifesaving medications. This is all while they are receiving less funding and grappling with new regulations that make it harder for them to provide care.

“The community has always done the work. Now federal leaders need to do theirs,” said Nick Armstrong, manager of advocacy and government affairs at AIDS Institute. “Ending HIV is still within reach, but only if Congress fully funds HIV programs, protects and strengthens access to care, and stops playing politics with people’s lives. On this World AIDS Day, we are calling on advocates and communities to stand firm, speak out, and organize. We cannot allow decades of progress to be undone by neglect or political games.”

On World AIDS Day 2025, The AIDS Institute calls on Congress and the administration to choose a future where the United States continues to lead with science, compassion, and justice in the fight against HIV. The next year will show whether we keep our promise to end the HIV epidemic or walk away from it.

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