

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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July 17, 2025

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

The Trump Administration has taken alarming and unprecedented steps to disrupt and eliminate federal funding for HIV prevention, treatment and research. The Trump Administration's actions threaten to upend decades of progress and scientific advancements that have taken HIV from a death sentence to a preventable and manageable disease. Under your leadership, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has made extensive cuts to HIV-related programs and slashed funds to bolster HIV research, prevention, and treatment in the United States. The Trump Administration has also withheld funds that our global partners rely on to combat HIV. We are concerned that your motivations for disrupting HIV funding and delaying preventative services and research are grounded not in sound science, but in misinformation and disinformation you have spread previously about HIV and AIDS, including your repeated claim that HIV does not cause AIDS. To understand the extent to which the Trump Administration is cutting life-saving programs to further a political agenda, we request information and documents related to HHS' ongoing attacks on HIV research, prevention and treatment.

Since taking office, the Trump Administration has systematically attacked HIV-related funding and blocked critical HIV-related services and care for those who need it most. These disruptions would threaten Americans most at risk of contracting HIV, and many people living with HIV will get sicker or infect others without programs they rely on for treatment.

At the end of May, the Trump Administration eliminated the HIV prevention division of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and terminated or delayed multiple grant awards related to HIV prevention.¹ Inexcusably, HHS failed to notify state and local health departments as to whether ongoing HIV prevention grants had been renewed or terminated, causing chaos for those attempting to provide care.

¹ *Trump Administration Ends Program Critical to Search for an H.I.V. Vaccine*, New York Times (May 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/05/30/health/trump-hiv-cuts.html).

In Los Angeles County alone, healthcare providers and HIV/AIDS nonprofits report that CDC delays and lack of clarity jeopardized \$19.45 billion in HIV prevention funding and have forced health care providers to cancel contracts, reduce services, and stop providing care.² CDC restored grant funding on June 26, 2025, following serious criticism by advocates, public health experts and House Democrats. However, the delays caused many health care providers to stop providing preventive care while funds were withheld, including services that support a range of HIV prevention initiatives such as expanding access to PrEP, an HIV prevention drug.³

On May 30, 2025, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced the termination of a \$258 million program focused on finding a vaccine to prevent new HIV infections. The termination halts ongoing HIV vaccine research at both Duke University and the Scripps Research Institute, and jeopardizes promising new treatments for HIV and treatments for autoimmune diseases and other critical therapeutics.⁴ The Trump Administration provided little to no information for its May 30, 2025, decision to cut \$258 million in funding for HIV vaccine research, other than a brief statement that “NIH expects to be shifting its focus toward using currently available approaches to eliminate HIV/AIDS.”⁵ HIV researchers warn that the Trump Administration’s decision to eliminate this program could be catastrophic and terminates promising clinical trials for vaccines already in the pipeline.⁶

In March 2025, NIH eliminated dozens of ongoing HIV research grants, jeopardizing patient care across the country.⁷ Motivated by the Trump Administration’s extreme culture war agenda, HHS appears to have specifically terminated studies designed to prevent new HIV infections in Black and Latino gay men, who are disproportionately more likely to contract the virus.⁸ Black patients represent 38% of HIV diagnoses in the United States, despite making up only 14% of the U.S. population. These ideologically motivated cuts have meant that non-profit healthcare providers primarily treating Black patients are suddenly unable to provide routine

² *LA County’s HIV prevention work threatened by federal funding cuts*, LAist (May 19, 2025) (online at <https://laist.com/news/health/hiv-prevention-federal-funding-cuts-cdc-california-trump>).

³ Communications between APLA Health and Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Democratic Staff (May 2025); *Trump administration restores funds for HIV prevention following outcry*, Los Angeles Times (June 27, 2025) (online at www.latimes.com/science/story/2025-06-27/trump-hiv-cuts-restored-funding-surpasses).

⁴ *Trump Administration Ends Program Critical to Search for an H.I.V. Vaccine*, New York Times (May 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/05/30/health/trump-hiv-cuts.html).

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Trump Administration Ending Multiple HIV Vaccine Studies, Scientists and Officials Say*, CBS News (May 30, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-administration-ending-multiple-hiv-vaccine-studies/); *Trump Administration Ends Program Critical to Search for an H.I.V. Vaccine*, New York Times (May 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/05/30/health/trump-hiv-cuts.html).

⁷ *‘People Will Die Based on These Decisions’: Trump Administration Cuts Funding for Dozens of HIV Studies*, CNN (Mar. 25, 2025) (online at <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/03/25/health/hiv-research-funding-cut/index.html>).

⁸ *Id.*

HIV treatment for patients who rely on their programs not just for HIV medication, but also for the management of chronic illnesses like diabetes and heart disease.⁹

Trump Administration attacks on HIV prevention and treatment are not limited to the United States. On January 20, 2025, the Trump Administration halted all foreign assistance programs, including the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which is credited with saving 26 million lives worldwide since its first authorization during the George W. Bush Administration.¹⁰ When these foreign assistance funds were halted, HIV-positive individuals who relied on U.S. funded programs for life-saving medications immediately lost access to care. Ongoing disruptions in the PEPFAR program may result in over 100,000 excess HIV-related deaths across sub-Saharan Africa in just one year, as well as 11 million additional HIV infections and 3 million additional AIDS-related deaths by 2030.¹¹ On February 6, 2025, the Department of State issued a moratorium excluding anyone other than pregnant and breastfeeding women from accessing PrEP as part of the Trump Administration's blanket ban on foreign assistance, preventing other populations who are at high risk of contracting HIV from getting necessary medications.¹²

On June 18, 2025, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved lenacapavir, a new medication that provides nearly complete protection against HIV infection with just one administration every six months. While advocates and researchers celebrate approval, many are worried that the Trump Administration's proposed HIV budget cuts and decision to slash the PEPFAR program mean the drug may not reach those who need it most.¹³ The Trump Administration's decision to pull out of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria earlier this year, further threatens the rapid rollout of lenacapavir in developing countries.¹⁴ It is critical that this decision be reversed, and that access to this critical medication be protected and expanded at all costs.

⁹ See *Trump Once Promised to End HIV in America. His Deep Funding Cuts are Rolling Back Progress in the South*, CBS News (June 3, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-end-hiv-in-america-funding-cuts/).

¹⁰ KFF, *The Trump Administration's Foreign Aid Review: Status of PEPFAR* (May 5, 2025) (online at www.kff.org/global-health-policy/fact-sheet/the-trump-administrations-foreign-aid-review-status-of-pepfar/); KFF, *Overview of President Trump's Executive Actions* (Apr. 3, 2025) (online at www.kff.org/global-health-policy/fact-sheet/overview-of-president-trumps-executive-actions-on-global-health/).

¹¹ KFF, *The Trump Administration's Foreign Aid Review: Status of PEPFAR* (May 5, 2025) (online at www.kff.org/global-health-policy/fact-sheet/the-trump-administrations-foreign-aid-review-status-of-pepfar/).

¹² *Trump Administration Takes Away Life-Saving HIV Prevention Medications from Vulnerable LGBTQI+ People Worldwide*, The Advocate (Feb. 13, 2025) (online at www.advocate.com/politics/trump-withholds-prep-lgbtq-pepfar); Journal of the International Aids Society, *HIV Prevalence Among Men Who Have Sex with Men, Transgender Women and Cisgender Male Sex Workers in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Systemic Review and Meta-Analysis* (Nov. 2022) (online at <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9684687/#:~:text=Currently%2C%20an%20estimated%2054%25%20of,for%20transgender%20people%20%5B10%5D>).

¹³ *HIV Protection With Just Two Shots a Year: FDA Approves Gilead Drug*, STAT (June 18, 2025) (online at www.statnews.com/2025/06/18/fda-approves-gilead-hiv-prevention-drug-lenacapavir-yeztugo-next-best-thing-to-vaccine/).

¹⁴ *Promise of Victory Over H.I.V Fades as U.S. Withdraws Support*, New York Times (June 26, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/06/25/health/hiv-lenacapavir-vaccine-trump-cuts-africa.html).

All these disturbing developments may worsen, dramatically. President Trump's Fiscal Year 2026 budget request for domestic HIV program calls for a \$1.5 billion reduction in funding that, if enacted, would drastically threaten access to HIV care and prevention services.¹⁵ Cuts to federal HIV prevention funding could lead to more than 143,000 additional HIV cases in the United States within five years and about 127,000 additional deaths from HIV and AIDS-related causes.¹⁶

The Trump Administration's decision to upend decades of progress combatting HIV and AIDS in the United States and throughout the world and your shepherding of these cuts as Secretary of Health and Human Services followed by you spreading serious misinformation about HIV transmission and prevention over the course of decades, going as far as to suggest that AIDS is caused by "poppers" –a recreational drug– and not HIV transmission, as understood by scientists since the 1980s. We are deeply concerned that the Trump Administration's HIV-related funding cuts are indiscriminate, rooted in a political agenda, and not at all in the interest of public health.¹⁷

To help us understand why HHS is terminating programs to prevent and eliminate HIV, we request that you provide the following documents and information by July 31, 2025:

1. All documents and communications related to the May 2025 decision to eliminate \$258 million in funding for HIV-related vaccine research at Duke University and Scripps Research Institute;
2. All documents and communications related to the decision to eliminate the CDC HIV prevention division, including a list of all programs terminated as part of this decision and all positions within HHS eliminated because of this decision;
3. All documents and communications related to the elimination of HIV research grants since January 20, 2025, and a full list of eliminated grants; and
4. A detailed list of all programs that provide HIV treatment or prevention services that HHS has stopped funding since January 20, 2025, including a description of how that program was identified, evaluated, and selected for defunding.

¹⁵ KFF, *Domestic HIV Funding in the White House FY2026 Budget Request* (Jun. 5, 2025) (online at www.kff.org/hiv/aids/issue-brief/domestic-hiv-funding-in-the-white-house-fy2026-budget-request/).

¹⁶ *Trump Once Promised to End HIV in America. His Deep Funding Cuts are Rolling Back Progress in the South*, CBS News (June 3, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-end-hiv-in-america-funding-cuts/).

¹⁷ *RFK Jr., AIDS and why the LGBTQI+ Community Is In An Uproar*, USA Today (Nov. 20, 2024) (online at www.usatoday.com/story/life/health-wellness/2024/11/20/rfk-jr-lgbtq-people-trump-hhs/76426549007/).

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

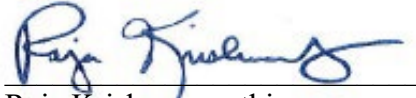
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The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Garcia', written over a horizontal line.

Robert Garcia
Ranking Member

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Raja Krishnamoorthi', written over a horizontal line.

Raja Krishnamoorthi
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health Care and
Financial Services

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

The Honorable Glenn Grothman, Chairman
Subcommittee on Health Care and Financial Services