

Cuts Kill! — Kill the Cuts!

Advocates rally on Capitol Hill and lobby legislators to save HIV funding.

September 8, 2025 By [Liz Highleyman](#)

Nearly 100 advocates rallied on Capitol Hill on Friday, September 5, to protest pending cuts to HIV prevention, services and research in the United States and worldwide. Displaying quilt panels submitted by organizations from across the country, the activists called on legislators to save—and expand—HIV funding.

Save HIV Funding rally, September 5, 2025 Video still courtesy of Save HIV Funding campaign

“Every single dollar that they are threatening to cut from HIV funding isn’t just a number on a spreadsheet. It’s someone’s medication, it’s someone’s housing, it’s someone’s health care and lifeline,” said Marnina Miller, co-executive director of the Positive Women’s Network. “We will not go back to the days of funerals every week. We will not go back to silence and HIV stigma. We will not go back to a time when our communities had to fight just to be seen as full humans. We will not go back to politicians ignoring our pain while our people died. We will not go back to those days.”

Friday's rally was just one of the actions held last week in conjunction with this year's United States Conference on HIV/AIDS (USCHA) as congressmembers returned from their summer recess to consider proposed budget cuts.

On September 2, a House Appropriations subcommittee advanced a bill that would cut some \$1.7 billion from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), though it rejected Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s proposed reorganization of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and funds it at about the same level as last year, [STAT reported](#). According to the [HIV+Hepatitis Policy Institute](#), the proposal would sharply cut the Ryan White Program and eliminate funding for President Donald Trump's Ending the HIV Epidemic initiative, most of which flows to state and local health departments.

[A rally at the Capitol on Wednesday](#) featured longtime supporter Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif). Throughout the week, advocates—including Hamilton actor Javier Muñoz and Survival of the Thickest star Peppermint—[met with legislators](#) to urge them to protect HIV funding.

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“It is extremely important for advocates to remind appropriators that there are real people behind these cuts,” PrEP4All executive director Jeremiah Johnson told POZ. “In meetings with some Republican offices this week, what struck me was the sense that this is just a ‘numbers game’ where the decisions being made on HIV funding cuts aren’t meant to be personal or targeted—it’s simply about getting all the math to line up. Our personal stories about the programs under threat and our accounts of how we’ll be affected by losing them directly challenges that cold calculus.”

The [SaveHIVfunding campaign](#) is asking people to directly call or write to their legislators to tell their own stories and urge them to reject HIV funding cuts.

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One of the speakers at Friday's rally was Texas state representative Venton Jones, one of the legislators who left the state capital in August in an effort to stop redistricting that aims to give more seats to Republicans.

"As we put out this quilt, remember the lives that have been lost. Remember the people who not only have given their lives but given their careers to make sure that we save Medicare, that we save Ryan White funding, HRSA [Health Resources and Services Administration] funding and all the programs that are under attack right now," said Jones, who has been living with HIV for nearly 20 years. "If you are really sick about what's going on, you're going to show up and you're going to vote, and you're going to get these people the hell out of here."

The advocates not only decried cuts to domestic HIV funding but also to the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which provides funds for prevention and treatment for people at risk for and living with HIV in low-and middle-income countries worldwide. Some 30 organizations and coalitions from across the African continent contributed a panel to the quilt.

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“When they heard about this action in Washington, DC, they said loud and clear, ‘We must be a part of it,’” said John Meade of AVAC. “PEPFAR supports 20 million people living with HIV across 55 countries. These cuts hit hard: 222,000 people are being denied their daily HIV prevention and treatment medication today, 224,000 HIV tests are being blocked every single day, 190,000 health care workers are left without resources. An estimated 97,000 adults and 10,000 children have already died since January. When we walk these halls and demand Congress stop the cuts, we do it not just for the people here in the United States, but for our family across the globe, whose lives are already on the line.”