HIV+HEP
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World AIDS Day: Ending AIDS Starts with Access

HIV+Hep Calls for Stronger Federal Commitment to HIV Prevention and Treatment

Washington, DC — On World AIDS Day, December 1, 2026, the HIV+Hepatitis Policy Institute remembers the more than 42 million lives lost to AIDS, celebrates decades of progress, and calls on policymakers to recommit to ending the HIV epidemic. This year's theme, *Ending AIDS Starts with Access*, underscores the urgent need to ensure that everyone can benefit from the highly effective HIV prevention and treatment medications available today.

"We have the tools to end HIV, but too many people still face barriers to lifesaving prevention and treatment," said **Carl Schmid**, **executive director** of the **HIV+Hepatitis Policy Institute**. "Our challenge to policymakers is simple: ensure that everyone has access to HIV prevention, care, and treatment, regardless of their insurance coverage, income, or where they live."

Despite tremendous advances, more than 39,000 people were newly diagnosed with HIV in the United States in 2024. An estimated 2.2 million people in the United States could benefit from HIV prevention medication known as PrEP, yet significant disparities and insurance barriers persist, particularly for newer long-acting medications. Over 250,000 people who are living with HIV in the US are out of care.

The incoming Congress has an opportunity to build on the *Ending the HIV Epidemic* initiative launched during President Trump's first administration and accordingly must adequately fund HIV prevention programs at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program, while expanding access to PrEP.

A key priority should be passage of the **PrEP Access and Coverage Act**, which would ensure comprehensive insurance coverage of all forms of PrEP without cost-sharing or unnecessary barriers, provide PrEP to uninsured individuals, and expand provider education and community outreach. States are already taking action to improve access, and federal leadership is needed to ensure these protections are available nationwide.

At the same time, rising enrollment and healthcare costs, along with potential losses of Medicaid coverage are placing increasing pressure on the Ryan White AIDS Drug Assistance Programs (ADAPs), which provide lifesaving treatments for people living with HIV. Congress must increase funding to protect these critical safety-net programs.

Community-based organizations also remain essential to HIV testing, prevention, and connecting people to care. HIV+Hep urges the administration to restore direct CDC funding for community-based HIV prevention efforts. If they do not, Congress should direct them to do so. Finally, policymakers must ensure that people living with HIV are protected from Medicaid coverage losses associated with new work requirements.

"Ending HIV requires more than medical breakthroughs. It requires sustained federal investment, strong insurance protections, and a commitment to reaching those who are being left behind," concluded Schmid. "We know how to end this epidemic. Now we need the political will to make access a reality for everyone."

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The **HIV+Hepatitis Policy Institute** is a national, non-profit organization whose mission is to promote quality and affordable healthcare for people living with or at risk of HIV, hepatitis, and other serious and chronic health conditions.