Celebrities and a #CutsKill Quilt Join AIDS Advocates in DC to #SaveHIVFunding

As the U.S. Conference on HIV/AIDS (USCHA) takes place this week, GOP lawmakers propose massive HIV funding cuts. Learn more about the “Slash and Burn” bill.

September 3, 2025 By Trent Straube

Broadway star Javier Muñoz and reality TV sensation Peppermint will join HIV advocates at the nation’s capital this week to urge Congress members to #SaveHIVFunding. The effort coincides with the annual U.S. Conference on HIV/AIDS (USCHA), held this year in Washington, DC, September 4 to 7.

This year’s conference—the nation’s largest gathering of the HIV community—will take place as HIV programs and many folks affected by HIV face unprecedented attacks from the federal government. Notably the Trump administration and Republican Congress members have slashed HIV funding and research both nationally and globally, with more draconian cuts proposed by the Trump White House for fiscal year 2026.

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What's more, a proposed "Slash and Burn" funding bill recently released by the House of Representatives' Labor, Health and Human Services appropriations subcommittee goes even further than Trump's proposal. These House Republicans aim to cut nearly $2 billion from national HIV programs. According to HIV advocates, the budget proposal, which could be considered later this week, would eliminate $1 billion in HIV prevention programs at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The proposed bill would also decimate dental and workforce programs for people with HIV, the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Care and Treatment Programs (including grants to provide health care and treatment) and Trump's own Ending the HIV Epidemic initiative.

"This is not a bill for making America healthy again but a disastrous bill that will reignite HIV in the United States," commented Carl Schmid, executive director of the HIV+Hepatitis Policy Institute. "We urge Congress to reject these reckless cuts. Eliminating all HIV prevention means the end of state and local testing and surveillance programs, educational programs and linkage to lifesaving care and treatment, along with PrEP [pre-exposure prophylaxis, to prevent HIV]. It will translate into an increased number of new HIV infections, which will be costlier to treat in the long run. At a time when we have the tools to prevent HIV, including new long-acting forms of PrEP, we must not abandon the bipartisan progress our nation has made in combating HIV."

"These massive cuts would eviscerate the public health and community-based programs and clinics that patients count on for lifesaving HIV screening, prevention, care and treatment services and gut our nation's ability to respond to sexually transmitted infections, viral hepatitis and emerging infections like mpox," said Colleen Kelley, MD, MPH, chair of the HIV Medicine Association, in a separate release.

Kelley continued: "Defunding HIV programs will not make the virus disappear but will increase new HIV cases, increase health care costs and cause countless preventable deaths. We cannot afford to backtrack in public health and in efforts to end the HIV epidemic. Lives and the health of our country are at stake."

All of this arrives in addition to the forthcoming trillion-dollar cut to Medicaid, the insurance program that over 40% of Americans with HIV rely on for coverage and care.

Hence, the dire need for the "Save HIV Funding" campaign and its public efforts to fight against budget cuts. The campaign launched in 2023 to rally a response to protect federal funding and support of HIV programs as well as those focused on sexually transmitted infections (STIs), viral hepatitis and substance use and prevention.

This week, “Save HIV Funding” campaigners will lead several actions in DC, including:

- On Wednesday, September 3: Members of the #SaveHIVFunding campaign, including Muñoz (of Broadway’s Hamilton) and Peppermint (Netflix’s Survival of the Thickest) will meet with Congressional offices to share stories and underscore the urgent need for sustained HIV funding.

- On Thursday, September 4: Advocacy continues with additional meetings with lawmakers, coalition events, caucuses and for press interviews.

- On Friday, September 5: Advocates will join together for a powerful reveal and presentation of the #SaveHIVFunding #CutsKill Quilt, starting at 9 a.m. and featuring an interactive installation symbolizing the lives that will be impacted by cuts to federal HIV programs, highlighting what’s at stake if funding is cut.

“We will be joining activists from all over the nation to display the ‘Cuts Kill’ quilt panels in front of Congress,” event organizer Ande Stone told CBS in San Francisco. “This is an homage to the AIDS Memorial Quilt of the 1980s as well as a stark warning to Congress of what could happen if they fail to take action.”

“Save HIV Funding” issued an action alert that spells out talking points and ways folks can counter Republican Congress members’ proposed 2026 cuts. The alert outlines how the proposed $2 billion in cuts will affect HIV programs and people affected by HIV:

- These cuts would eliminate CDC HIV programs. This would significantly reduce access to HIV prevention services that effectively prevent and have reduced new cases of HIV.

- The bill also would deeply cut the Ryan White Program by $525 million. This is an essential program that provides access to HIV care and treatment—these cuts would devastate access to HIV care and treatment nationwide.

- These cuts would result in new HIV cases, worse health outcomes and more lives lost.

- They also would increase costs as people would get sick and seek care at later stages and in more expensive settings, such as emergency rooms.

- HIV care is an important part of the U.S. health care system—federal HIV funding supports access to prevention, primary care, mental health services, housing and medications.

- Cuts will cost jobs and destabilize programs that people depend on—including people living with chronic conditions, low-income families and uninsured people.

In related news, see "HIV Activists Protest the Latest Blockage of Funds for Global HIV Program PEPFAR," "NMAC Appoints Harold Phillips as Incoming CEO in Advance of the 29th U.S. Conference on HIV/AIDS," "Watch Bodies and Coffins Pile Up in Protest Against Cuts to HIV and Health Services" and "HIV Activists March in NYC to Protest 'Death by 1,000 Musk Cuts."

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