



# How Budget Cuts to Global AIDS Program PEPFAR Would Impact HIV Care

Cuts to PEPFAR funding will put vulnerable populations at an even higher risk for HIV, particularly in African countries.

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The Biden administration plans to reduce funding for the U.S. global AIDS program [PEPFAR](#) by more than 6% in fiscal year 2025, [according to Politico](#).

Launched in 2003 by Republican President George W. Bush, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) works to prevent HIV and accelerate progress toward the elimination of [HIV](#) and [AIDS](#) in more than 50 countries. PEPFAR has saved an estimated 25 million lives, mostly in [Africa](#).

A PEPFAR spokesperson told Politico that the 21-year-old program, overseen by the State Department, has, in recent years, received funding from Congress that has exceeded State's ability to spend it. Consequently, Congress held the program's \$4.4 billion budget flat.

Until recently, PEPFAR enjoyed strong bipartisan support across 10 U.S. Congresses and four presidential administrations, according to [HIV.gov](#). Congress usually funds PEPFAR for five years at a time.

Last year, however, [PEPFAR became a victim of Republican culture wars](#) and budget fights, with GOP lawmakers claiming that PEPFAR indirectly supports abortion. Because Republicans control the House of Representatives, extremists in the party have successfully held up funding for PEPFAR. Instead of funding the program for the usual five years, it was extended for one year.

And that funding is now being cut. Politico reports that reductions in PEPFAR programs will significantly impact key high-risk populations, including men who have sex with men, people who

inject drugs, people in prison, people who engage in sex work and transgender people.

For example, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi may see reductions in programs of 3% and 29%, respectively, according to preliminary figures.

PEPFAR grantees and AIDS relief activists claim that the State Department is not doing enough to protect programs and key initiatives that serve these groups, notably vulnerable people in certain African nations.

“People are getting attacked, arrested, brutally assaulted, and it’s legitimate to ask what is PEPFAR’s strategy around communities and how is it possible to implement a robust strategy when the math is going in the opposite direction,” Asia Russell, executive director of Health GAP, an international advocacy organization that ensures that people with HIV have access to [lifesaving treatment](#), told Politico.

The State Department plans to finalize country-by-country budgets by the end of summer, according to Politico. Advocates and PEPFAR grantees hope the department will reverse cuts before discussing next year’s budget with Congress.

To read more, click [#PEPPFAR](#). There, you’ll find headlines such as “[PEPFAR, the U.S. Global AIDS Program, Extended for One Year](#),” “[Global Leaders Urge Congress to Support AIDS Program PEPFAR](#)” and “[Do Republican Spending Cuts Threaten Federal HIV Funding? For Some Programs, Yes.](#)”