

**MAXINE WATERS**

MEMBER OF CONGRESS  
43RD DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE:  
FINANCIAL SERVICES  
RANKING MEMBER

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-0535

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March 18, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Kennedy,

I write to express my profound outrage and deep concern regarding the reported complete elimination of \$700 million in Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funding for HIV prevention as a result of the 2025 Continuing Resolution. These funds are critical to state health departments, community-based organizations, and other frontline organizations that provide life-saving services such as HIV testing, education, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) access, and outreach efforts. Such a drastic and irresponsible action represents an abandonment of our national commitment to combatting the HIV/AIDS epidemic and will have catastrophic consequences for public health, particularly for the most vulnerable communities.

For decades, CDC's HIV prevention programs have played a critical role in reducing new infections, promoting testing and early diagnosis, and connecting individuals to life-saving treatment. The decision to zero out this funding will decimate programs that serve as the first line of defense in our battle against HIV/AIDS, putting millions of Americans at heightened risk. Without these essential resources, states and local jurisdictions will be left without the ability to provide critical prevention services such as PrEP, syringe exchange programs, HIV testing, and community outreach initiatives—all of which are proven to be highly effective in reducing transmission rates.

Adding to this crisis, I am also deeply alarmed by reports that the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is considering further cuts to its HIV programs, which provide essential resources for individuals facing both substance use disorders and heightened HIV risk. SAMHSA funding is critical in addressing the intersection of addiction and HIV prevention, particularly through harm reduction strategies like syringe service programs, behavioral health interventions, and linkage to treatment. Any cuts to SAMHSA's HIV-related initiatives would further weaken our ability to fight this epidemic, compounding the disastrous impact of the CDC funding elimination and leaving already vulnerable populations without the support they need.

The impact of this funding elimination will not be borne equally across the nation—it will disproportionately harm Black, Latino, LGBTQ+, and low-income communities, where the burden of HIV remains disproportionately high. States like Georgia, Florida, Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi—where HIV transmission rates are among the highest in the country—will be hit particularly hard. These states rely heavily on CDC funding to sustain prevention programs that serve people at greatest risk, and without federal support, these programs will be forced to shut down, exacerbating health disparities and undoing decades of progress.

This decision is not just reckless—it is deadly. By eliminating HIV prevention funding, lives will be lost. People who rely on outreach programs for testing will go undiagnosed. Individuals who depend on prevention services will be left unprotected. Health systems that have worked tirelessly to combat this epidemic will be overwhelmed with preventable cases. This is an unconscionable abdication of responsibility by the federal government.

I demand immediate answers regarding how this decision was made, who authorized it, and what steps—if any—your department is taking to mitigate the harm that will result from this devastating loss of funding. Furthermore, I urge you to work with Congress to reverse this reckless decision and preserve full funding for CDC's HIV prevention programs and SAMHSA's HIV programs before irreparable damage is done.

I expect a detailed response outlining the Department's plan to address this crisis. The lives of millions of Americans are at stake, and inaction is not an option.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Maxine Waters". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Maxine" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Waters".

Maxine Waters  
Member of Congress