



June 16, 2023

Honorable Xavier Becerra  
Secretary  
Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Ave SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra:

On Tuesday, the Partnership to End HIV, STDs, and Hepatitis received news that the funds for the next two years of the DIS workforce expansion had been rescinded as part of the Fiscal Responsibility Act and we write urgently to ask the administration to pursue other routes to fund the DIS Workforce as quickly as possible.

DIS are trusted community health workers who are in and of the communities they serve. In order to effectively intervene in infectious disease outbreaks such as COVID-19, HIV, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), they identify people who may not be aware that they have an infection, connect individuals with testing and treatment, and counsel individuals on prevention. It is a role that requires high levels of cultural competency, strong interpersonal communication during sensitive conversations, expert navigation of the health system, phlebotomy and field outreach services, and more. This workforce played a lifesaving role during COVID-19, were ready to help affected communities respond quickly to last year's mpox outbreak, and continue to help states combat the rising congenital syphilis numbers by connecting pregnant people with the effective treatment they need.

Since COVID-19 began, HHS has invested \$600 million directly into states and local jurisdictions to build up the DIS workforce to respond to our nation's toughest public health and infectious disease crises. This program was estimated to support at least 3,000 jobs nationwide by 2026. Halting the full five-year commitment Congress and the Administration made to strengthen the public health workforce jeopardizes the investment already made to address existing infectious disease outbreaks and outbreaks on the horizon, and endangers the vast majority of DIS positions and their communities' health.

Public health workers are experiencing widespread burnout, and the news of this rescission gives them no reprieve. Staff on the ground are scared for their teams, for what a rapid scale back will mean for the future of HIV, STI and other infectious disease prevention, and for how it will compound the inequities that already exist in the syndemics our organizations collectively work to end. As our country's highest-ranking health official, we implore you to work creatively across the administration to ensure adequate funding is allocated to protect this workforce for at least the next year.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jesse Milan, Jr.  
President and CEO  
AIDS United  
[jmilan@aidsunited.org](mailto:jmilan@aidsunited.org)

Michael Ruppel  
Executive Director  
The AIDS Institute  
[mruppel@tmail.org](mailto:mruppel@tmail.org)

Stephen Lee  
Executive Director  
NASTAD  
[slee@nastad.org](mailto:slee@nastad.org)

David C. Harvey  
Executive Director  
National Coalition of STD Directors (NCSO)  
[dharvey@NCSDDC.org](mailto:dharvey@NCSDDC.org)

Paul Kawata  
Executive Director  
NMAC  
[pkawata@NMAC.org](mailto:pkawata@NMAC.org)

Secretary Becerra

June 16, 2023

Page 2

CC: Shalanda Young  
Sean McCluskie  
Rachel Levine  
Rochelle Walensky  
Nirav Shah  
Adrian Shanker  
Mark Brown  
Sherri Berger  
Kate Wolff  
Topher Spiro  
Cassie Boles  
Norris Cochran  
Dan Lentine