

## Cardin Commemorates 30th Anniversary of World AIDS Day

Posted by [Alan Van Wormer](#) On 12/01/2018

**BALTIMORE** – U.S. Senator Ben Cardin, a senior member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, issued the following statement marking World AIDS Day on December 1, 2018.

“This year, we can celebrate 30 years of progress made to fight HIV/AIDS globally and recommit ourselves to creating an AIDS-free generation.

“Last week, Congress passed another bipartisan reauthorization of the President’s Plan for Emergency AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). Since launching in 2003, PEPFAR has had a transformational impact on HIV/AIDS by catalyzing an incredible global response that has saved and transformed the lives of those living with HIV. Through PEPFAR, the United States has provided over 14 million people with lifesaving antiretroviral treatment in more than 50 countries.

“When PEPFAR began in 2003, only 50,000 children were on life-saving treatment in Africa; now, over 700,000 children are supported by antiretroviral treatment. PEPFAR has enabled over 2.4 million babies of HIV-infected mothers to be born HIV-free. It has provided critical care and support for more than 6.8 million orphans, vulnerable children, and their caregivers to mitigate the physical, emotional, and economic impact of HIV/AIDS. These are only a few of the many ways we have progressed in combatting HIV/AIDS.

“Integral to reducing the number of new HIV cases and the viral loads of those living with HIV is testing. The theme of this year’s World AIDS Day is ‘know your status.’ HIV testing allows people to make informed decisions about their future—including options for treatment and prevention. According to data from UNAIDS, in 2017, 36.9 million people were living with HIV. Of those 36.9 million, 75 percent were aware of their HIV status. These numbers have steadily increased over the years and we must continue our work to expand access to, and remove the stigmas associated with, HIV testing.

“While there is much to celebrate, there is still a tremendous amount of work to be done. PEPFAR reports that only 52 percent of children ages 0 to 14 with HIV have access to lifesaving treatment, compared to 59 percent of adults with HIV. In 2017, 180,000 children were newly infected with HIV. That is 180,000 too many.

“The President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) has been a bipartisan success story that started with a strong commitment by President George W. Bush and grew under President Obama. Current threats to the continued progress of critically important programs have come from our own leadership in the White House—which annually has proposed enormous funding cuts for both PEPFAR and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. Congress must continue to press the Trump administration to recognize the colossal impact of restricting funding to these programs, including the lifesaving treatment and evidence-based prevention interventions they provide to men, women, and children, and the greater impact on achieving epidemic control. In the United States, we must ensure that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and many of our other partners have the resources they need to continue making significant progress to prevent, treat and one day cure this disease.

“Two years ago, I had the privilege of meeting a 30-year-old man in Namibia named Simon who said he thanked the American people for supporting the life-saving treatment and care that he received through PEPFAR and the Global Fund. Individual stories of patients, like Simon, speak to the incredible impact of our collective efforts. They underscore the importance of maintaining support for the programs, including PEPFAR, the Global Fund, and UNAIDS, that made this success to date possible.

“I also call on the Trump administration to reverse its reinstatement and expansion of the Mexico City policy, often referred to as the ‘global gag rule,’ which impedes the ability of organizations to provide life-saving prevention, detection, and treatment services. These investments must be not only continued, but increased as we can see an AIDS-free generation on the horizon.

“While we celebrate the progress that we have made on the 30th anniversary of Global AIDS Day, we must recommit ourselves to combat HIV/AIDS both at home and abroad, beginning with testing. With the commitment of partner countries – reinforced by the support of donor nations, civil society, people living with HIV, faith-based organizations, scientific research community and academia like Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland, the private sector, foundations, and implementing organizations like Catholic Relief Services and Lutheran World Relief – success in the fight against HIV/AIDS is within our grasp.”