

# The Impact of Budget Sequestration on the Fight Against HIV/AIDS in Black America

**On March 1, federal budget sequestration is scheduled to go into effect. This will result in across-the-board cuts of 5.3% in most non-defense discretionary programs, including Ryan White, HIV prevention, HIV research, AIDS housing support, and prevention and treatment programs for people with substance abuse problems.<sup>1</sup>**

**By withholding vital funding from essential HIV programs that have seen minimal increases in recent years, these looming cuts will undermine efforts to achieve the targets set forth in the National HIV/AIDS Strategy.<sup>2</sup> The most severe effects will be felt in Black America, which has been more heavily affected by the HIV epidemic than any other racial or ethnic group.**

## **Cuts to Vital HIV Programs Will Not Contribute to Deficit Reduction**

Reducing the long-term federal deficit is a goal that all Americans share, but the cuts to life-saving HIV programs will make minimal contributions toward this objective. Discretionary health spending of any kind accounts for only 1.5% of the nearly \$4 trillion in federal spending<sup>3</sup>, and domestic HIV-related spending (\$22.25 billion in FY2013, as proposed in the President's executive budget<sup>4</sup>) represents a mere 2.4% of total federal outlays on health (\$920.0 billion in FY2013<sup>5</sup>).

In short, cuts to HIV spending will make no meaningful contribution to deficit reduction, as spending to fight the HIV epidemic here in the U.S.—one of the most important

of all public health priorities—accounts for an infinitesimal percentage of federal spending.

## **Black America Will Feel the Effects of These Cuts the Most**

Representing only 12-14% of the U.S. population, Black Americans account for 44% of all new HIV infections. Black men are seven times more likely than white men to become infected with HIV, and the rate of new infections for Black women is 20 times greater than for white women.<sup>6</sup>

Effects of these cuts are likely to be most pronounced in the South, where Black people account for only about a quarter of the total population but for the large majority of people living with HIV. In Alabama, for example, Black people represent 26% of the state's population but 69% of all new HIV diagnoses.<sup>7</sup> Accounting for 17% of Tennessee's population, Black people make up 57% of all people diagnosed with HIV.<sup>8</sup> And in Texas, Blacks constitute less than 12% of the state's population but represent 40% of new HIV diagnoses.<sup>9</sup> Needing critical HIV services the most, Black Americans will be hurt the most when vital funding for these services is withheld as a result of the budget sequester.

## **Sequestration Will Deprive at Least 3,241 HIV-Positive Black Americans of Life-Saving HIV Treatment**

According to an updated analysis by amfAR and the National Minority AIDS Council, 10,130 Americans living with HIV will be deprived of access to the AIDS Drug Assis-



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Illustrated using professional model.

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tance Program (ADAP) as a result of sequestration.<sup>10</sup> With Black individuals accounting for 32% of all ADAP clients in 2011<sup>11</sup>—and with the epidemic’s disproportionate toll in Black communities increasing over time—one can assume that at least 3,241 Black Americans living with HIV will lose access to essential antiretroviral treatments and other HIV drugs in Fiscal Year 2013 under the sequester.

In reality, the number of HIV-positive Black Americans who are deprived of essential medicines under budget sequestration is likely to be substantially greater. As ADAP programs are most financially vulnerable in the South, funding reductions are likely to hit hardest in this region. Two Southern states (Florida and Louisiana) together accounted for 89% of all individuals on ADAP waiting lists in September 2012, and of the 19 states that have implemented cost containment measures due to ADAP funding shortfalls nine are in the South (Alabama, Arkansas,

Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia).<sup>12</sup>

As Southern ADAP programs serve disproportionate numbers of Black people living with HIV—Blacks account for 63% of ADAP enrollees in Alabama, 64% in Georgia, 62% in Louisiana, 61% in North Carolina, 74% in Mississippi, 61% in North Carolina, and 65% in South Carolina<sup>13</sup>—cuts in these states are likely to result in disproportionate loss of medical access to Black Americans.

**Fewer Black Americans Will  
Learn Their HIV Status**

Reductions in CDC funding under budget sequestration will mean 424,000 fewer HIV tests in FY2013.<sup>14</sup> In nine Southern states—Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Texas—these cuts will result in the performance of 111,900 fewer HIV tests.<sup>15</sup> As Black Americans are more likely to seek HIV testing than other Ameri-



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cans—the percentage of Black adults who have ever been tested is more than twice as high as for whites<sup>16</sup>—Black America will account for a disproportionate share of the 424,000 Americans who fail to access HIV testing as a result of across-the-board budget cuts. This will mean delayed entry to care for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Black Americans, and will also contribute to unknowing HIV transmission among individuals who would have learned their HIV-positive status had these cuts not gone into effect.

### **More Than 350 Black Americans Will Be Needlessly Infected**

The American Public Health Association has estimated that cuts in federal HIV prevention funding under the budget sequester will result in nearly 800 preventable new HIV infections.<sup>17</sup> Assuming the continuation of recent epidemiological patterns, this would mean that at least 350 Black Americans would needlessly acquire HIV as a result of diminished access to critical HIV prevention services.

### **Budget Sequestration Will Undermine the Search for a Preventive Vaccine**

Most at risk for HIV, Black Americans have the greatest need a preventive vaccine, microbicides and other prevention tools. As a result of budget sequestration, 297 HIV-related research grants will be without funding, including 32 for vaccine-related research.<sup>18</sup>

### **Endnotes**

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