

The Connecticut General Assembly



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CONNECTICUT LAWMAKERS RECOGNIZE WORLD AIDS DAY

Every December 1 since 1988, groups across the globe have recognized World AIDS Day, an international day dedicated to raising awareness of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, increasing education, and speaking out against the stigma that shrouds HIV/AIDS.

While the epidemic may seem like an artifact of the turn of the century, Connecticut has seen a steady increase in the percentage of newly diagnosed HIV cases, particularly among Black and Hispanic/Latino men.

"Medicine and technology have advanced quite a bit since the onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and have made a once tragic illness manageable. But each year, we see new HIV diagnoses. We must work to educate people about HIV and create avenues for young people to advocate for themselves," said **State Representative Jeff Currey** (D – East Hartford, Manchester, South Windsor). "Last year the legislature took steps in the right direction, but there is still more work that needs to be done to bolster protections for LGBTQ+ individuals in Connecticut."

"HIV/AIDS remains a major health challenge which disproportionately impacts communities of color," said **State Representative Raghiv Allie-Brennan** (D – Bethel). "Of particular concern is the increasing instance of HIV/AIDS in children and young people between the ages of 13 and 24. There is a clear need for additional resources and education to help promote testing and fight the stigma associated with this disease. Testing for HIV/AIDS has never been easier and more accessible. Everyone should get tested so that they know their status."

During the 2019 legislative session, the Connecticut General Assembly passed several pieces of legislation aimed at HIV education and prevention. [Public Act 19-109](#) expanded access to HIV-prevention medication to minors, one of the demographics that experienced a recent spike in new HIV diagnoses. Lawmakers also established a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Health and Human Services Network to better understand and meet the needs of the LGBTQ+ community.

According to [data](#) from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, individuals between the ages of 13 and 24 are among the most at-risk of contracting HIV, behind the 25 to 34 age group. Within that age group, data demonstrates that in the U.S., Black men who have sexual contact with men (MSM) accounted for approximately 53% of new HIV diagnoses. It is important to note that diagnoses among Black gay and bisexual men between the ages of 13 and 24 decreased 11% from 2010 to 2017.

The CDC attributes the higher prevalence of HIV among Black MSM to lower rates of viral suppression when compared to MSM of other races and ethnicities. It also attributes poorer health outcomes among

HIV-positive Black MSM to socioeconomic factors including lack of access to high-quality health care, housing, and HIV prevention education.

Residents who would like to know their HIV status can find a testing location near them at <https://locator.hiv.gov/map>.

More information about World AIDS Day is available at <https://www.hiv.gov/events/awareness-days/world-aids-day>.

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