

Long targeted in abortion battle, U.S. global AIDS program gets new home in state department

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The President's Emergency Program for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), a program that's long successfully provided relief to people with AIDS around the world, will now be housed within the U.S. State Department.

The move comes after years of pressure by anti-abortion groups and some Republican members of Congress to attach abortion-related limits on U.S. health support overseas, including PEPFAR.

The program was started by President George W. Bush in 2003, and has received about \$100 billion in U.S. funding over the past two decades. But PEPFAR will now be included within the new Bureau of Global Health Security and Diplomacy, part of the State Department, the *Associated Press* reported.

The newly created bureau is meant to make [health security](#) a global priority while building the capacity of U.S. diplomats and local health systems to curb future outbreaks, according to Secretary of State [Antony Blinken](#).

PEPFAR has maintained bipartisan support, but the new move to the State Department occurs as the program continues to be targeted as part of the abortion battle.

PEPFAR has saved as many as 25 million lives in Africa and around the world, making it "the single greatest health achievement in history," [Samantha Power](#), head of the U.S. Agency for International Development, told the *AP*.

The newly created bureau will be led by [John Nkengasong](#), who was born in Cameroon and is a founder of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention operations in Africa, the *AP* reported.

Under Nkengasong's guidance, the CDC helped set up the first

sophisticated labs for HIV/AIDS work in that region, the *AP* reported.

Nkengasong said the lessons learned from the U.S. HIV program "are applied daily" with regard to other health threats, the *AP* reported.

Power noted the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on people and the economy, as well as new estimates that [climate change](#) could increase chances of another COVID-like pandemic by 40% during the lifetime of people living today, the *AP* reported.

Blinken said that he hoped Congress would approve the program for five more years without amendments.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [HIV](#).

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