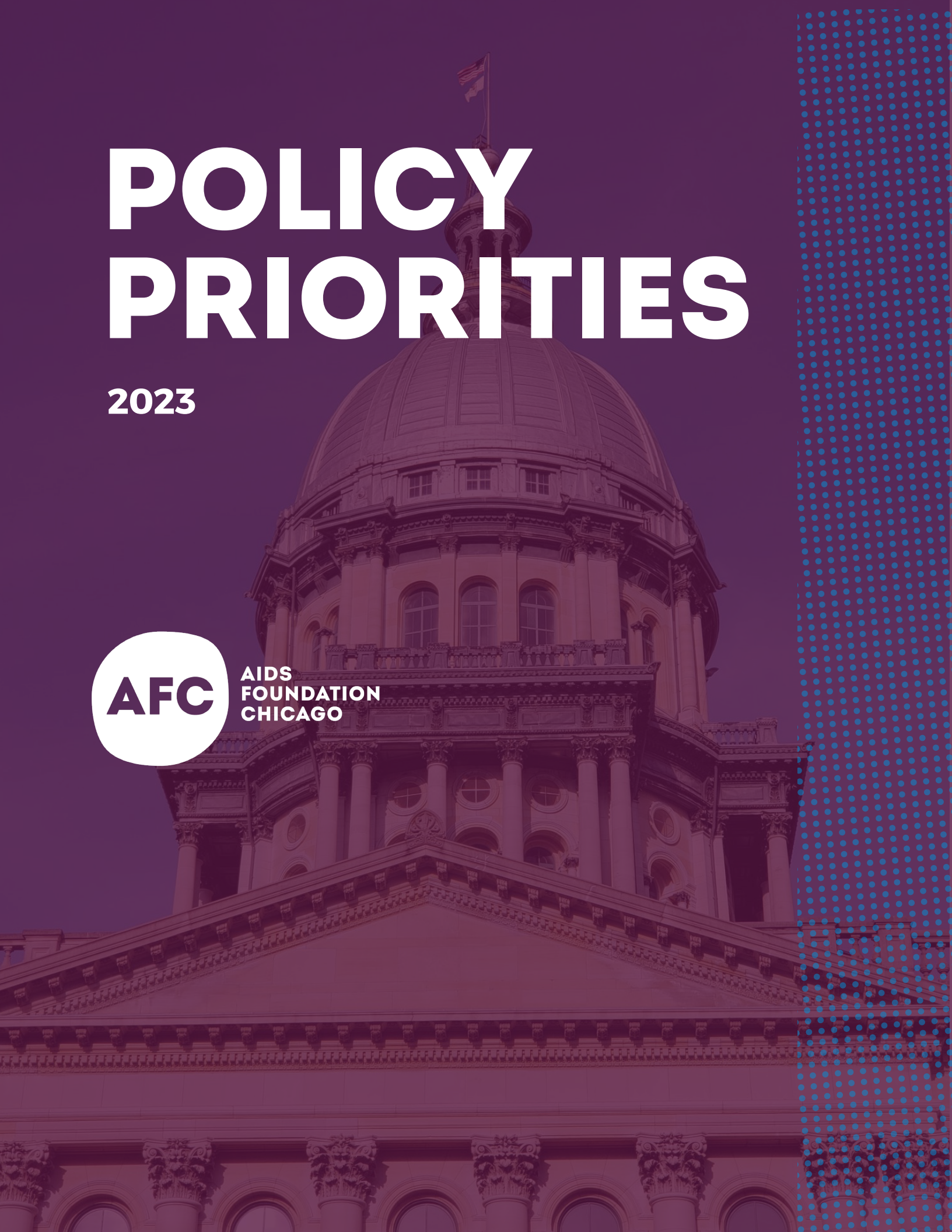


# POLICY PRIORITIES

2023



AIDS  
FOUNDATION  
CHICAGO



# 2023 ILLINOIS STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

During the 2023 Spring Session of the 103rd Illinois General Assembly, AIDS Foundation Chicago (AFC) is proud to advocate and prioritize the following state legislative agenda in partnership with and through the leadership of community organizations and coalitions across Illinois.

Honoring the [Denver Principles](#) and the meaningful involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS (MIPA) is always critical to our collective advocacy. We are honored to center the marginalized communities impacted by the intersectional crises of HIV, systemic racism, housing instability, lack of access to healthcare, the carceral system and other social determinants of health in our policy work and advocacy.

There is no way to ensure health care access, to get to zero, or to accomplish any of our work without dedicated and purposeful focus on racial equity. Black, Latin/o/e/x and LGBTQ+ communities are all disproportionately impacted by HIV. Grounded in addressing racial health equity with a keen focus on community, AFC's policy agenda directly aligns with the statewide Getting to Zero Illinois (GTZ-IL) plan to end the HIV epidemic by 2030, as well as the agency's Strategic Plan and Racial Equity Action Plan. AFC's policy priorities reflect our mission and the needs of people living with or vulnerable to HIV as well as people experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

## POLICY PRIORITIES DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Each year, AFC's Policy and Advocacy (P&A) team initiates its policy priorities development process to determine its policy agenda for the state legislative session.

During the summer and fall of 2022, AFC staff conducted thirteen (13) listening sessions designed to engage community stakeholders in conversations about policies impacting people living with or vulnerable to HIV as well as people experiencing homelessness or housing instability. These listening sessions—attended by 195 people—included people living with HIV, health care and social service providers, advocates, case managers and others. In addition, AFC staff conducted a survey to elicit feedback from our priority populations about the pressing issues facing our communities; 130 people from across the state, the majority of who were Black, Latinx or other people of color, completed the survey. Following the closing of the survey and the conclusion of the listening sessions, AFC compiled this feedback and identified the most critical items to take action on during the 2023 Spring session of the Illinois General Assembly.

### 2023 POLICY PRIORITIES

- Strengthening & Protecting Illinois' HIV Funding Infrastructure (HIV Funding Omnibus)
- Housing Funding Omnibus
- Healthy Illinois for All
- Health Insurance Rate Review & Affordability
- Healthcare Provider Cultural Competency
- Overdose Prevention Sites Pilot Program
- Gender-Inclusive Multiple-Occupancy Restrooms

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## STRENGTHENING & PROTECTING ILLINOIS' HIV FUNDING INFRASTRUCTURE (SPIHFI)

To realize the priorities and goals of the Getting to Zero Illinois (GTZ-IL) plan to end the HIV epidemic by 2030, we must have the resources to implement public health prevention strategies and interventions that work. Prioritizing critically needed investments will allow us to reach the communities that have too often been left out and left behind. Further, these investments will place Illinois on the right path to end the HIV epidemic and provide healthier and more equitable futures for all Illinoisans.

As we have done annually, AFC will advocate for the following investments to HIV & sexually transmitted infections (STI) education, prevention, testing, and treatment, in addition to investments in housing and supportive services, in the FY 2024 State Budget.

- **HIV LUMP SUM:** Illinois must invest an additional \$2 million in Fiscal Year 2024 funding for HIV prevention and treatment services, including HIV testing and Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP). This investment in HIV services and prevention programs will lead to the continued reduction of new HIV cases, especially when prioritized in communities where the need is greatest.
- **AFRICAN AMERICAN HIV/AIDS RESPONSE FUND (AAHARF):** To address the disproportionate impact HIV has inflicted on Illinoisans living with or vulnerable to HIV and other chronic conditions, especially those in the Black community, AFC supports an investment of an additional \$15 million in state funding for the AAHARF for fiscal year 2024.

- **GETTING TO ZERO ILLINOIS (GTZ-IL):** Protect and maintain the \$10 million in state funding for the GTZ-IL initiative that provides for an at-home HIV testing kit pilot program, HIV-related stigma reduction programs, housing for formerly homeless and unstably housed people living with HIV, increased access to PrEP, and HIV awareness and education across the state.
- **SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs):** AFC is advocating for new STI funding of \$1 million to be prioritized in the state budget to address the growing rates of STI diagnoses (i.e., Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, & Syphilis) through prevention, testing and treatment.
- **PrEP4ILLINOIS PROGRAM:** AFC is advocating for an increase in the state's investment of the PrEP4Illinois program by \$5 million to improve access to PrEP and ancillary services (i.e., laboratory testing) to uninsured and underinsured Illinoisans.

**BILL SPONSORS:** Representative Lakesia Collins (D-Chicago) and Senator Mike Simmons (D-Chicago)

**GTZ-IL PLAN FOCUS:** State agencies collaborate and coordinate efforts to increase long-term investments in services that are aligned with GTZ-IL. (Goal 18)

## HOUSING FUNDING OMNIBUS

Without question, housing is healthcare, especially to people living with or vulnerable to HIV. Individuals with HIV who are homeless or lack stable housing, on the other hand, are more likely to delay HIV care and less likely to access care consistently or to adhere to their HIV treatment. Additionally, homelessness disproportionately impacts Black communities more than other racial groups—much like HIV and other chronic conditions.

AFC and its subsidiary organization, the Center for Housing and Health (CHH), are committed to using a Housing First approach, a philosophy that links people experiencing homelessness with safe, affordable housing quickly and with minimal barriers, so people can start their journey to a healthier life sooner.

As we have done annually, AFC and CHH are proud to work alongside community partners Housing Action Illinois, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless and the Supportive Housing Providers Association (SHPA) to advocate for the following investments to the housing funding infrastructure in the state's FY2024 budget:

- **SUPPORTIVE HOUSING SERVICES:** Based on the current availability of 17,684 supportive housing units, Illinois needs an additional 40,749 supportive housing units, with almost half of those in need of these units having a disabling condition. Illinois must invest an additional \$17.9 million in this program that combines housing and needed wraparound services (current funding: \$42.59 million).
- **HOMELESS YOUTH PROGRAM:** This program supports drop-in centers, youth health initiatives, transitional housing, and case management providing lifelines for youth and a path toward a stable, successful future. To protect the most vulnerable in our communities, Illinois must invest an additional \$5 million in funding for this program (current funding: \$7.28 million).
- **HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION PROGRAM:** This program provides rental and utility assistance to assist families and individuals to remain in their homes and has assisted over 128,000 households remain housed after receiving small grants from the program. To continue the work of preventing homelessness in our communities, Illinois must invest an additional \$5 million into this critical program (current funding: \$10 million).
- **EMERGENCY AND TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAM:** This crucial program funds crisis housing and supportive services. Taking inflation into account, state funding for the ETH Program is only half what it was 20 years ago. The Illinois Interagency Task Force on Homelessness estimates the unmet need is for 4,551 additional emergency shelter beds. Increasing the funding for this life-saving program by \$51 million would support the new non-congregate and fixed site shelters due to be developed in the near future (current funding: \$10.38 million).



**BILL SPONSORS:** Representative Michelle Mussman (D-Schaumburg) and Senator Adriane Johnson (D-Waukegan)

**GTZ-IL PLAN FOCUS:** Increase housing and supportive services opportunities for people living with or vulnerable to HIV who are experiencing homelessness or housing instability to remove barriers to Antiretroviral (ARV) use for HIV treatment and PrEP. (Goal 9)

## HEALTHY ILLINOIS FOR ALL

The COVID-19 pandemic illuminated the historic racial, ethnic and income inequities in accessing health care. Undocumented immigrants—millions of whom continue to serve on the frontlines of the pandemic as essential workers—face astounding barriers to health care, from uncertain coverage of testing and treatment to fear of immigration consequences if they access health care. We cannot continue to accept health care disparities as normal and inevitable.

To address this pressing issue, AFC is pleased to support legislation that seeks to:

- Extend Medicaid-like eligibility to all low-income Illinois residents ages 19 through 41 with household incomes of up to 138% Federal Poverty Level (\$17,236/year for an individual) regardless of their immigration status.
- Include funding to cover Long Term Services and Supports (both facility-based care and Home and Community-Based Services) in the Health Benefits for Immigrant Adults (HBIA) and Health Benefits for Immigrant Seniors (HBIS) programs.

AFC, a steering committee member of the Healthy Illinois campaign, is proud to work alongside Healthy Illinois and its partner organizations to ensure that all Illinoisans are able to access quality, affordable health care coverage.

**BILL SPONSORS:** Representative Elizabeth “Lisa” Hernandez (D-Chicago) and Senator Omar Aquino (D-Chicago)

**GTZ-IL PLAN FOCUS:** Improve public and private health insurance coverage for all individuals experiencing disparities. (Goal 15, Strategy 49)

## HEALTH INSURANCE RATE REVIEW & AFFORDABILITY

No one should have to worry that they can't afford the healthcare they need or have to choose between filling a prescription and paying rent. In Illinois, racial and ethnic disparities in health insurance coverage and access are reflected in people of color being more likely to be uninsured & more likely to go without care due to cost. National studies indicate that healthcare is unaffordable for 29% of Black adults and 21% of Latin/o/e/x adults. In addition, low- and middle-income Illinoisans living with HIV are forced to choose between accepting premium rate increases or going uninsured.

To address these pervasive issues impacting the communities we serve, AFC supports legislation that seeks to make health insurance premiums more affordable. Specifically, this legislation seeks to:

- Allows the State Department of Insurance to disqualify health insurance rates that are excessive, inadequate, or unfairly discriminatory, which is standard practice in 36 states and Washington, D.C.
- Mandates that the State Department of Insurance posts proposed health insurance rates on its website and provides a 30-day comment period and a public hearing on the proposed rates.
- Creates the Office of the Healthcare Advocate, an independent advocate for consumer and small business interests related to the affordability of individual and small group insurance and HMO plans.

- AFC is proud to work alongside the Shriver Center on Poverty Law, Citizen Action Illinois, American Cancer Society, Small Business Majority and many others to advance this critical legislation.

**BILL SPONSORS:** State Representative Bob Morgan (D-Deerfield) and State Senator Laura Fine (D-Glenview)

**GTZ-IL PLAN FOCUS:** Improve public and private health insurance coverage for all individuals experiencing disparities. (Goal 15, Strategy 49)

## HEALTHCARE PROVIDER CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Cultural humility and competency centers on being open to differences and prioritizes space for celebrating that which is most important to the other person. Cultural competency training among medical providers celebrates these cultural differences and includes information on sensitivity relating to providing affirming care to people in the person's preferred language, people with disabilities, people living with HIV, and people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

Specifically, this legislation would require health care professionals with continuing education requirements to undergo cultural competency training.

AFC and Pride Action Tank are proud to partner with Equality Illinois, Planned Parenthood Illinois, Access Living, Howard Brown Health, ALMA Chicago, and other community stakeholders on this important legislation.

**BILL SPONSORS:** State Representative Dagmara "Dee" Avelar (D-Bolingbrook) and State Senator Ram Villivalam (D-Chicago)

**GTZ-IL PLAN FOCUS:** Partner with state professional societies to establish continuing education requirements for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) cultural awareness and affirmation; LGBTQ-affirming health care; anti-HIV stigma and anti-racism practices; and HIV, STI and viral hepatitis standards of care and best practices. (Goal 1, Strategy 2)

## OVERDOSE PREVENTION SITES PILOT

Overdose prevention sites (OPS), sometimes called safe injection sites or supervised consumption facilities, are evidence-based health resource centers where people can obtain medical assistance, receive treatment, learn safer use techniques, and be rescued by trained clinical and peer recovery staff in case an overdose occurs. OPS have been shown to save lives, reduce the spread of infectious diseases, such as HIV and Hepatitis C, and link those with substance use disorders to behavioral and physical health care.

Specifically, this legislation would:

- Create a harm reduction services license for OPS pilot sites
- Connect folks to community support or other existing medical care, treatment, recovery programs and harm reduction services
- Establish minimum principles and features for OPS, informed by the harm reduction and medical communities
- Require programs to hire peers/people with lived experience along with medical staff.

As a member of the Illinois Harm Reduction and Recovery Coalition (IHRRRC), AFC is proud to work alongside harm reduction advocates, people with lived experience, coalition partners, the West Side

Heroin Opioid Task Force and other stakeholders to advance this critical legislation.

**BILL SPONSORS:** State Representative LaShawn Ford (D-Chicago) and State Senator Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago)

**GTZ-IL PLAN FOCUS:** Ensure statewide availability of health promotion and harm reduction programs, including HIV/HCV/STI screening and treatment, syringe exchange, overdose prevention and medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for people who use drugs. (Goal 16, Strategy 52)

## GENDER-INCLUSIVE MULTIPLE-OCCUPANCY RESTROOMS

Illinois law currently prohibits business owners and public entities from installing gender-inclusive multiple-occupancy restrooms, even if businesses want to do so to better support their customers.

AFC and Pride Action Tank are proud to work in coalition with Chicago Restroom Access Project (CRAP) and many others on this legislative effort that would allow but not require public and private entities to install gender-inclusive multiple-occupancy restrooms in their buildings if they want to do so. Passing this measure would create inclusive spaces for transgender, nonbinary and gender-expansive communities while also allowing businesses to better serve their customers.

**BILL SPONSORS:** Representative Katie Stuart (D-Edwardsville) and Senator Celina Villanueva (D-Chicago)

**GTZ-IL PLAN FOCUS:** Reduce or eliminate challenges associated with the unique lived experiences of individuals and communities experiencing health disparities. (Goal 16)

### END THE HIV EPIDEMIC

AFC will help end the HIV epidemic and get to zero new transmissions of HIV.

### TEAM UP FOR JUSTICE & CHANGE

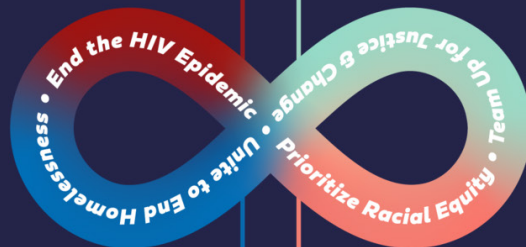
AFC will mobilize and develop communities of supporters and allies to raise up and sustain our mission-driven work.

### UNITE TO END HOMELESSNESS

AFC will work with communities, partners, and health systems to ensure all Chicagoans have access to a safe and affordable home.

### PRIORITIZE RACIAL EQUITY

AFC will prioritize the work of racial equity to dismantle systems of oppression, racism and white supremacy in support of our common humanity.



## GETTING TO ZERO ILLINOIS (GTZ-IL)

Led by sixty-two (62) community partners across Illinois, GTZ-IL will be accomplished through increased access to and uptake of PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) for prevention, retaining more people living with HIV in care and continued funding of ongoing supportive services and programs.

Despite significant progress in reducing new HIV transmissions, dramatic health disparities remain. All genders, ages, racial/ethnic groups, and geographic regions are impacted by HIV in Illinois but not all are impacted equally. GTZ-IL prioritizes four communities in Illinois who are disproportionately impacted by HIV:

- Black gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men,
- Latino/e/x gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men,
- Transgender women of color, and
- Black cisgender women.

AIDS Foundation Chicago and the Illinois and Chicago Departments of Public Health coordinate the Getting to Zero Illinois project. For more information about Getting to Zero Illinois and to see the progress we are making, please visit <https://gtzillinois.hiv/>.



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