Lifting All Boats: The Broad Benefits of Increased Investments in HIV/AIDS Research

In 2014, language included in every National Institutes of Health (NIH) budget since the early 1990s directing NIH to invest 10% of its funding in HIV research was removed. In just four years (2014-2017), removal of this language has resulted in 600 million fewer dollars being available for NIH HIV research. At the same time, inflation has shrunk the purchasing power of NIH HIV research dollars such that our ability to invest in new treatments, prevention tools, and, most importantly, a cure is at its lowest since 2003. HIV research has not only saved the lives of millions of people living with HIV, but has contributed to the development of new treatments and technologies for a broad range of diseases. Increases in the NIH HIV research budget lift all boats.

Many new and experimental treatments for diseases such as cancer, hepatitis and Alzheimer’s have arisen from research on HIV/AIDS. Here are just a few examples:

- Drugs developed to treat HIV are now widely used to treat hepatitis B.
- Researchers are investigating the use of protease inhibitors—first used to treat HIV—to treat Alzheimer’s disease.
- Experimental treatments for several types of cancer have grown directly out of AIDS research.
- A new class of anti-HIV drug called a CCR5 inhibitor is being tested for the treatment of certain autoimmune disorders.
- Tests developed to diagnose HIV are now routinely used to detect other diseases such as hepatitis C, TB, and Lyme disease.