



# Duckworth, Menendez Urge Trump Admin to Protect, Guarantee Health Care Access for Americans with HIV, LGBTQ Community During COVID-19 Outbreak

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– U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Bob Menendez (D-NJ), along with nine Senate colleagues, wrote to Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar to express serious concerns about the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the 1.1 million Americans living with HIV in light of the Administration’s rolling back of LGBTQ healthcare discrimination protections. COVID-19 poses a serious health risk for individuals living with immunodeficiency disorders like HIV, and this risk is heightened by barriers to healthcare access.

“While many state and local governments have implemented important policies to reduce the spread of COVID-19, social distancing will not be enough to protect individuals living with HIV. We urge you to lift refill limits of maintenance drugs, including antiretrovirals, for people with chronic conditions such as HIV,” the Members wrote. “Additionally, we urge you to work with LGBTQ and HIV/AIDS-focused organizations to ensure that programs and services related to COVID-19 reach individuals living with HIV.”

Last May, HHS [rolled back](#) protections for transgender patients, and last June, the agency published a [proposed rule](#) that would roll back anti-discrimination protections in Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act. This proposed rule would eliminate protections based on gender identity and sex stereotyping, which is understood to encompass sexual orientation.

In January, HHS published a [proposed rule](#) that would allow the agency's grant recipients to cite religious faith as justification for choosing not to serve certain people, such as members of the LGBTQ community.

The letter was also signed by Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Chris Coons (D-DE), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Gary Peters (D-MI), Charles Schumer (D-NY), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA).

The full text of the letter can be found [here](#).