



# Biden administration 'hijacking' George Bush AIDS program to push abortion in Africa: GOP congressman

By: Andrew Mark Miller | Saturday, June 10, 2023

A Republican congressman is sounding the alarm on what he says is a plan by the Biden administration to "hijack" former President Bush's successful program delivering AIDS relief to Africa to promote its abortion agenda on the continent.

"President Biden has hijacked PEPFAR, the \$6 billion a year foreign aid program designed to mitigate HIV/AIDS in many targeted — mostly African — countries in order to promote abortion on demand," New Jersey Republican Rep. Chris Smith, wrote in a letter to his colleagues on Capitol Hill this week. Smith is the prime sponsor of a 2018 bill enacted into law to reauthorize PEPFAR for five more years.

PEPFAR, the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, was launched in 2003 under President George W. Bush and has invested over \$100 billion fighting AIDS across the world while saving 25 million lives and preventing millions of infections, the State Department says. PEPFAR is up for reauthorization in Congress this year.

Smith says two groups, Population Services International (PSI) and Village Reach, have received \$96.5 million and \$10.1 million, respectively, over the last few years from PEPFAR under Biden, and both groups have a track record of pushing abortion.

"PSI proudly proclaims it provides abortion and lobbies to eliminate pro-life laws," Smith wrote. "PSI provides comprehensive abortion and post-abortion care services in nearly 20 countries throughout the world."

Smith alleges Village Reach used PEPFAR funds "to promote abortion in Malawi and lobby for changes in pro-life laws" and also "helped Malawi establish a government-funded hotline (that included providing information and referrals for 'sexual and reproductive health,' i.e., abortion).

"Village Reach and Planned Parenthood used PEPFAR funding through the DREAMS Innovation Challenge to create a manual containing a whole module on 'unsafe abortion and young people,'" Smith wrote. "Items covered include the need to change pro-life laws to provide "services that young people need."

Village Reach added that it "provides no counsel or abortion services."

A third group, Pathfinder International, has received \$5 million in PEPFAR funding since Biden took office. Smith says the group "lobbies to weaken or eliminate pro-life laws in nations around the world" and is "explicit in its promotion of abortion in other countries, stating it is "committed to expanding access to ... safe abortion."

According to Smith, this NGO funding represents the track that the Biden administration is trying to take PEPFAR down as evidenced by a 2022 document titled "Reimagining PEPFAR's Strategic Direction."

Smith says the document "makes absolutely clear that the new direction of the program includes integrating PEPFAR with abortion promotion."

Twice in the document, commitments to "reproductive health rights and services" are listed under the section of "strategic pillars."

In PEPFAR's Regional Operational Plan Guidance for 2023, it states that PEPFAR works with "organizations advocating for structural, systemic, and institutional reforms in law and policy regarding sexual, reproductive, and economic rights of women."

"They want to change the laws in these countries," Smith told Fox News Digital. "That's not what PEPFAR was originally intended to do. He [Biden] has radically changed the trajectory of PEPFAR."

Smith isn't the only critic who has expressed concerns over PEPFAR's ties to abortion activism under the Biden administration. In May, the Daily Caller reported about a letter sent by 31 conservative and pro-life groups calling on legislators to block any possibility of abortion funding through PEPFAR.

"We are concerned that grants from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) are used by nongovernmental organizations that promote abortions and push a radical gender ideology abroad. We urge you to ensure that any reauthorization of PEPFAR ensures that taxpayer money is not used for such purposes," the letter, signed by groups like The Heritage Foundation and Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, said.

Additionally, a group of 139 African parliamentarians sent a letter to Congress Tuesday to express "concerns and suspicions that this funding is supporting so-called family planning and reproductive health principles and practices, including abortion, that violate our core beliefs concerning life, family, and religion."

"Polling consistently shows that an overwhelming majority of Americans — nearly 8 in 10 — oppose taxpayer funding of abortion in other countries, and the vast majority of African countries categorically reject the abortion culture that the Biden administration brazenly promotes," Smith told Fox News Digital.

"Congress must ensure that any multi-year PEPFAR reauthorizing legislation prevents this noble foreign aid program — designed to care for those who are ill and tangibly assist women and children — from being used to poison, starve or dismember unborn children to death."

In a statement, Village Reach called Smith's characterization "inaccurate" and said the group received a DREAMS Innovative Challenge award for \$1.3 million in 2016 and implemented the program between October and November 2018.

"What we delivered complied with U.S. law and Malawi law," the statement said. "We are proud of our work and how it delivers on our mission to transform health care delivery to reach everyone."

In a statement to Fox News Digital, PSI called Smith's letter "erroneous."

"PSI's safe abortion work remains separate from U.S. Government funding due to long-standing U.S. laws and regulations," the statement said. "No programs implemented by PSI with funding from PEPFAR ... or USAID (United States Agency for International Development) or any other U.S. Government entity include abortion services."

A White House spokesperson told Fox News Digital PEPFAR funding "does not support" abortion provisions in accordance with "longstanding legal restrictions on the use of foreign assistance funding for abortions."

The official explained that the "false narrative" on abortion was a "disinformation campaign" spread by groups that oppose the reauthorization of PEPFAR, which has enjoyed bipartisan support for 20 years.

The official said the White House is "confident" PEPFAR will be reauthorized on a bipartisan basis.

Smith told Fox News Digital the White House is engaging in "misdirection" given that Biden rescinded the Mexico City Policy, which prevented nonprofits from using federal funding to promote abortion, and that the Helms Amendment doesn't adequately prevent these organizations from promoting abortion.

"I am sickened at heart that Biden is so wedded to and obsessed with promoting abortion that he would undermine the consensus that exists for this PEPFAR program, which is a great program. But it's been diverted to promote the killing of unborn baby girls and boys," Smith said.

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