

AIDS Drug Assistance Program summit participants plan more action

By [Marcos Restrepo](#) | 07.08.11 | 5:28 pm

More than 120 people, including delegations from 20 states, participated in a national summit on the ongoing AIDS Drug Assistance Program crisis held this week in Washington, D.C. The theme of the gathering was: "[When will Washington come to the rescue?](#)"

The delegations included [Florida and Georgia](#), the states that have the first- and second-longest Drug Assistance Program waiting lists, respectively, in the U.S. The Drug Assistance Programs supply life-saving drugs to HIV/AIDS patients who are uninsured and/or unable to afford their medications. Waiting lists started to emerge in different states in June 2009 as one of several cost-containment measures to deal with a shortage in funding.

Brandon Macsata, CEO of the [AIDS Advocacy Association](#), the organization that hosted this week's summit, tells The Florida Independent that after watching the crisis unfold over the last two years, participants were reenergized by the fact that the Drug Assistance Programs received \$48 million in new funding at the federal level for the fiscal year that ends on Sept. 30.

Macsata adds that the new Drug Assistance Program funding says a lot for:

The funds are allocated to states based on their population and HIV/AIDS incidents, Macsata explains, so Florida will receive considerably more in absolute dollars and percentage than other states. In fact, he adds, Florida has already started to receive these new funds. #

"The bottom line is that there is light at the end of the tunnel," Macsata adds, "I can't say that the worst is behind us because we are still seeing these waiting lists grow at a clip of 200 people a week, and when the [jobs report](#) comes out every month people are not finding work, companies aren't hiring. If you're out of work and don't have insurance you have one place else to go, you are looking for that payer of last resort that happens to be ADAP."

Macsata says that during the summit, his group tried to give participants the necessary tools to become "more vocal and better self-advocates" when they visit their elected representatives in D.C.

Macsata adds that other actions summit participants agreed to develop include launching a social media platform called MyGov365, where people can track HIV/AIDS-related legislation and appropriations, eliminating the buffer of national and state organizations and creating a direct link to Congress.

The group also intends to organize smaller conferences throughout the year to motivate people to visit members of Congress at their home offices.

Asked what problems remain, Macsata said that we are still not appropriating the dollars to follow the increasing demand, forcing patients to wait in line.

"This sends the wrong message," he says. "I know there are people who won't get tested because if they get tested and don't have insurance, then what are they going to do?"

[Follow Marcos Restrepo on Twitter](#)

Categories & Tags: [Government Accountability/Reform](#) | [Health Care](#) | [LGBT](#) | [Politics](#) | [U.S. House](#) | [U.S. Senate](#) | [AIDS Advocacy Association](#) | [AIDS Drug Assistance Programs](#) | [Brandon Macsata](#) | [HIV/AIDS](#) |

[Switch to our mobile site](#)