



News Release

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Washington Secretary of Health Named to Co-Chair Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS (PACHA)

Alex Azar, secretary of Health and Human Services, announced earlier today that he has asked Washington State Secretary of Health, [John Wiesman](#), to serve as a co-chair of the reconstituted Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS (PACHA).

Azar made the announcement in a [speech](#) at the 2018 National Ryan White Conference on HIV Care and Treatment where he laid out a vision for our country “where the spread of HIV/AIDS has been effectively halted, because every American with HIV/AIDS is receiving treatment and every American at risk of HIV is engaged in the right prevention strategy.”

PACHA provides advice, information and recommendations to the secretary regarding programs, policies and research to promote effective treatment, prevention and cure of HIV disease and AIDS.

Secretary Wiesman began his public health career in 1986 as an HIV/AIDS test counselor at the Greenwich Department of Health in Connecticut. He was a member of the first group of people trained in Connecticut to conduct HIV counseling and testing services. Today he leads the state health department that is implementing an End AIDS effort that Governor Inslee initiated by [proclamation](#) in 2014.

Washington state’s approach to ending the AIDS epidemic can best be summarized as: [“Get Insured. Get Tested. Get PrEP. Get Treatment.”](#) This approach relies on getting people health insurance, having them know their HIV status, getting them into treatment if they have HIV so their HIV viral load can become undetectable, which equals to not being able to transmit the virus, and if they are HIV negative and at high risk for becoming infected, encouraging them to get onto a daily pill to prevent infection (known as PrEP or pre-exposure prophylaxis).

“For those of us who saw the beginning of HIV, it is a dream that we are at a time when we can truly end new cases of HIV,” said Secretary Wiesman. Achieving this goal he says “requires federal, state and local leadership coordinating efforts and mustering its resources, and I am pleased to have this opportunity to help lead public health in an all-out effort to stop HIV. This is our time to be bold.”

As a state health official and past president of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, Secretary Wiesman is positioned to work with his colleagues across our nation to focus their efforts on this goal. This work will further the Association’s presidential challenge of “Building healthy and resilient communities.”

Secretary Wiesman has been invited to co-chair the PACHA with [Carl Schmidt](#), Deputy Director of the AIDS Institute. He is excited to have a well-known HIV advocate and past PACHA member as a co-chair to mobilize the advocates and community-based organization sectors.

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