

2025 Annual Conference Summary

*“Resilience in Uncertain Times:
Advancing HIV Science, Policy, and Community Together”*
November 13, 2025 | St. Anne’s Event & Conference Center

On November 13, 2025, the Los Angeles County Commission on HIV held its Annual Conference at St. Anne’s Conference & Event Center, bringing together community members, partners, Commissioners, service providers, researchers, and policymakers for a day of honesty, connection, and collective purpose. The conference opened with a welcome, moment of silence, and land acknowledgment led by Commission Co-Chairs, Dr. Danielle Campbell and Joseph Green, grounding the room in reflection and community care.

Opening Remarks & Congressional Message

Dr. Marisa Ramos, Chief of the California Department of Public Health’s Office of AIDS, offered opening remarks that were both grounding and forward-looking, reminding participants that partnership, courage, and alignment are essential during times of uncertainty.

Although unable to attend in person, Congresswoman Maxine Waters provided a [written statement](#) celebrating the conference theme and reaffirming her commitment to protecting HIV prevention, care, housing, and research programs. She highlighted her decades of advocacy and shared updates on two new federal bills designed to strengthen HIV prevention and sustain public health programs.

Reimagining the Commission

Commission Co-Chair, Joseph Green, and consultant, AJ King, walked attendees through the [Commission’s restructure](#), framing the vision behind this new era of impact and how it strengthens the Commission’s ability to respond to community needs with clarity and purpose.

State of HIV & STIs in Los Angeles County

Mario J. Pérez, MPH, Director of the Division of HIV and STD Programs (DHSP), delivered an [overview](#) of the local HIV and STI landscape, grounding the room in where Los Angeles County stands, where gaps persist, and what coordinated, community-centered action is needed.

Panel Discussion: Science in Action, Research for Change - Advancing Global and Local Efforts to End HIV

Moderated by Dr. Danielle Campbell, this panel brought together Dr. Judith Currier, Dr. William King, Dr. Rhodri Dierst-Davies, and Dr. Leon Maultsby, who bridged innovation, implementation, and equity. They



emphasized that scientific breakthroughs matter only when communities can access them—and when research is guided by real-world lived experience.

Panel Discussion: Policy & Legislation - Safeguarding HIV Programs Amid Censorship and Funding Threats

Moderated by Commissioner Arburtha Franklin, panelists Katja Nelson, Bee Curiel, and Darryn Harris discussed funding cuts, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) rollbacks, and censorship, emphasizing that policy determines who gets access, who gets protected, and who gets left behind. They centered on protecting essential programs through coalition-building and strategic advocacy.

Keynote Address: Resilience Through Policy – Advancing Equity and Access with the PrEP and PEP Are Prevention Act (H.R. 5127)

Keynote speaker Robert Gamboa of the Los Angeles LGBT Center delivered Resilience Through Policy – Advancing Equity and Access with the PrEP and PEP Are Prevention Act (H.R. 5127). He connected science, policy, and community in a way that helped the room see both the challenges and the path forward, emphasizing that we do not build systems of care *for* communities, but *with* communities. His address was powerful, timely, and deeply grounding for the work ahead.

Commission on HIV: A Year in Review

Midway through the afternoon, attendees viewed a special Commission highlight reel — a pre-recorded narration by former Commission on HIV Executive Director, Cheryl A. Barrit. The reel reflected on a year marked by major structural shifts, community-driven initiatives, and collective perseverance.

The video uplifted key accomplishments across the Commission’s working committees and caucuses, including advancements in integrated planning, the launch of new community listening sessions, strengthened partnerships with DHSP, and progress on the Commission’s comprehensive restructure.

It also highlighted the extraordinary work of Commissioners, staff, and community partners who continued to push forward in a year defined by both innovation and challenge. The reel served as a moment to pause, honor shared progress, and acknowledge the leadership, adaptability, and dedication that moved the work forward.

This segment grounded the room in the truth that the Commission’s impact is the result of many hands and voices working together — a theme that echoed throughout the rest of the conference.

Panel Discussion: Community Engagement & Advocacy - Strategies for Collective Action

Moderated by Commissioner Miguel Alvarez, panelists Gerald Garth, Shellye Jones, Kevin Pizarro, and Thelma Garcia uplifted what it means to authentically engage community, centering care, trust, and



shared power. Gerald Garth reminded the room: “None of us have to do everything if all of us do something.”

Community Call to Action: From Reflection to Action

In the closing session, Commissioner Joaquin Guiterrez guided attendees through a democratic process to identify and vote on shared priorities. The final Calls to Action were:

- Strengthen authentic relationship-building across community, Commissioners, partners, and policymakers.
- Develop a universal sexual health marketing campaign that agencies can adapt and use countywide.
- Create a coordinated, all-agency social media campaign to expand awareness of HIV prevention services throughout Los Angeles County.

Community Moments

Michael Barajas of Gilead Sciences delivered a lunch presentation on Cultural Humility, anchoring the day in the reality that HIV work is rooted in people and relationships. Attendees also viewed [LA Cumbia Del Movimiento](#) by Bamby Salcedo, and the day closed with an Art Legacy Exhibition featuring artwork created by artists living with HIV more than two decades ago.

Closing Appreciation

The Commission expressed deep gratitude to all speakers, panelists, Commissioners, DHSP partners, community members, and Commission staff—Dawn, Jose, Lizette, and Sonja—whose support, leadership, and coordination made the day possible. Special thanks were extended to Gilead Sciences for sponsoring lunch and supporting the conference.

The 2025 Commission on HIV Annual Conference was a reminder that this work only moves forward when we move together—aligned, informed, and rooted in community.

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