

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
DIVISION OF HIV AND STD PROGRAMS**

June 5, 2026

**Statement from Mario J. Pérez on the
45th Anniversary of the June 5, 1981, CDC MMWR**

Forty-five years ago today, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)¹ published a brief account of five young men in Los Angeles with a rare lung infection. That report — one page, a handful of cases — was the first official recognition of the global HIV epidemic. It is a moment that belongs to the history of UCLA and our County, as much as it belongs to the annals of public health.

In the 45 years since that published report, more than 44 million people worldwide have died from AIDS-related illness. That toll demands our continued reflection and our continued resolve. The level of loss has also spurred impressive levels of grassroots advocacy and scientific progress. Advances in antiretroviral treatment have transformed HIV from a fatal diagnosis into a manageable condition; biomedical prevention offers the potential to prevent millions of new infections. The work of community advocates, public health leaders, researchers and clinicians over four and a half decades has been remarkable, and we are grateful for it.

Still, significant work remains. HIV continues to disproportionately affect gay and bisexual men, transgender women, people experiencing homelessness, and communities facing poverty and the ravages of untreated mental illness and substance use disorder. Addressing these disparities and ending the HIV epidemic will require an even broader and sustained response, renewed leadership, and a commitment by all of us to preserve and protect public health infrastructure, science and innovation.

This anniversary comes at a moment when the public health infrastructure that undergirds and ties this work together faces significant threats and uncertainty. Present day HIV, measles and Ebola outbreaks remind us of what happens when we abandon our commitment to disease control and prevention -- unnecessary and preventable loss of life will follow.

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health's Division of HIV and STD Programs will remain steadfast in its commitment to the communities and people impacted by this epidemic, in partnership with tireless community-based organizations, healthcare providers, and people living with HIV across our County. On this day, we re-commit ourselves to ensure that every person in Los Angeles County has access to the HIV prevention, testing, treatment, and support services they need and deserve — without exception.

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¹ CDC. "Pneumocystis Pneumonia — Los Angeles." *MMWR*, June 5, 1981; Vol. 30, No. 21. Available at: <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/1261>