

COMMUNITY POSITION STATEMENT
LD 1115 – OUGHT TO PASS
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH COVERAGE, INSURANCE AND FINANCIAL SERVICES

April 8, 2021

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and Honorable Members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services: we, the undersigned, are community organizations, public health advocates, constituents, and individuals that are, work with, care for, love, and/or support Mainers living with or at a heightened risk to contract HIV. We write to express our strong support for LD 1115, *An Act to Improve Access to HIV Prevention Medications*. This bill will expand access, both in terms of insurance costs and entry points, to the most promising tools currently available to prevent HIV transmission and bring an end to the HIV epidemic.

Simply put, HIV Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) is a game changer in HIV prevention; it is a simple, safe daily pill that reduces the risk of HIV transmission by close to 100 percent. Obtaining this medication at low or no cost through any avenue that is straightforward and accessible is imperative for the most vulnerable among us, including people of color, people who live in rural areas, people who have been incarcerated, and people who inject drugs and are working to stay safe. However, a host of factors has led to severe underutilization of this extraordinary medication. These include: stigmas associated with being a gay or bisexual person, being a man who has sex with men, and intravenous drug use; fear or distrust about talking to doctors about their risk behaviors; and a general lack of education – the availability of the medication, its costs, and the adherence regime – among the community and care providers. HIV Post-exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) is an equally remarkable and necessary medication intervention immediately following a potential exposure to HIV, including in cases of sexual assault.

We need to do everything we can to expand access to PrEP/PEP and create more avenues to reduce HIV transmission. This bill is an innovative, simple, and effective approach that (1) begins to reduce the significant barriers that people face in accessing PrEP/PEP, and (2) allows those at risk to obtain these medications quickly and safely. Finally, this bill is an additional tool to tackle the systemic problem of health care access and connections to care for those at risk of HIV by requiring participating pharmacists to act as a point of contact and reference to primary care providers for individuals seeking this treatment.

We thank you for the opportunity to express our support for this important legislation and urge you to unanimously vote *ought to pass* on LD 1115.

ACLU of Maine
Boundless MEDIA
Cambodian Community Association of Maine
EqualityMaine
Frannie Peabody Center
Gateway Community Services Maine
GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders
Greater Portland Health
Health Equity Alliance
Mabel Wadsworth Center
Maine Access Points
Maine Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence
Maine Family Planning
Maine Immigrant Rights Coalition
Maine HIV/AIDS Advisory Committee
Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition
Maine TransNet
Maine Women's Lobby
Planned Parenthood of Northern New England

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