

Testimony in Support of House Bill 6540
AN ACT CONCERNING THE PREVENTION OF HIV

By Alyssa Bennett, MD
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To the distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

I respectfully submit the following testimony in support of H.B. 6540, *An Act Concerning the Prevention of HIV*. I am currently the Division Head of Adolescent Medicine at Connecticut Children's Medical Center. Following my pediatric residency at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine, I completed a 3-year adolescent medicine fellowship at Boston Children's Hospital. I returned to Connecticut Children's in July 2016 to provide primary care and specialty care to adolescents and young adults in the area.

I discuss sexual and reproductive health prevention strategies with my patients on a daily basis. How can they prevent pregnancy? What are ways to prevent sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)? How do you know you have an STD? I empower youth to better understand their bodies, and realize that they have the right to make decisions about certain aspects of their health. I explain that in the state of Connecticut, minors may receive birth control, STD testing and treatment, and treatment for HIV without parental consent. As a result, I am able to prescribe birth control, emergency contraception, and antibiotics to treat STDs without informing their parents. This allows minors to have access to sexual and reproductive healthcare if they are not ready to disclose this need to their parents.

I believe the proposed bill is important, because it also allows minors to consent to a medication that prevents HIV without requiring parental consent, as opposed to waiting until they have acquired HIV and require treatment. Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is a prescription-based daily medication that reduces the risk of HIV infection by up to 92%. PrEP is safe, effective, and should be accessible to all people regardless of age to reduce the risk of HIV infection.

In the state of Connecticut, minors currently have the right to consent to all forms of birth control, emergency contraception medications, and antibiotics to treat STDs. Therefore, they should also have the right to consent to a medication that can prevent HIV.

I strongly support H.B. 6540 and I urge you to vote favorably for this important bill. Your support will protect the health and safety of Connecticut's youth. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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