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

By Nicholas Boshnack, MSW
February 22, 2019

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 not submitting this testimony in my position as Director of Client Services at APNH: A Place to Nourish your Health, but as a concerned Connecticut resident who wishes to advocate for youth who may not feel empowered to advocate for themselves.

Even though I am submitting this testimony as a private citizen I would like to review my professional experience in this field. APNH: A Place to Nourish your Health was previously known as AIDS Project New Haven. In October of 2018 we changed our name and expanded our mission to provide direct care and prevention services beyond HIV. Our expanded mission is to provide services to those who face stigma or challenges in receiving culturally competent care. Prior to that I was the Director of the Connecticut Ryan White Part D: Services for Women, Infants, Children, and Youth Program. The Ryan White Part D program provides outpatient ambulatory family-centered primary and specialty medical care and support services for women, infants, children, and youth living with HIV. I have over two decades experience working with youth and families living with, or affected by, HIV and those at great risk of becoming infected.

I believe the proposed bill is important because we should use every method possible to prevent new HIV infections. Stigma, homophobia and transphobia are still as prevalent as when I began my work in this field. Many of the youth who would most benefit from PrEP are unable to access it due to fear of parental rejection and, in some cases, fear of bodily harm. If youth determine that they would benefit from PrEP they should be given the ability to consent on their own. This will not only provide access to preventative care, but will empower youth to be actively engaged in achieving positive health outcomes.

I strongly support H.B. 6540 and I urge you to vote favorably for this extremely important bill. There should be no barriers preventing youth from accessing preventative care. Youth should not have to wait until after contracting HIV to access care. Your support will protect the health and safety of Connecticut's children. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,



Nicholas Boshnack, MSW