

February 15, 2018

Connecticut General Assembly
State Capitol
Hartford CT, 06106

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in support of CGA HB 6540, an Act Concerning the Prevention of HIV, which is intended to increase access to preventative and prophylactic interventions for minors who are at risk of exposure to HIV. Although I am writing in my capacity as a private citizen, from 2015-2017 I worked for the CT Department of Public Health HIV Prevention Program as the point person for coordinating access to Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis. Were PrEP readily available to and made use of by those at high risk of contracting HIV, we would all but eliminate new infections in our state. Unfortunately, it is not that easy. My role as a facilitator of PrEP access existed because of the need to develop programming to address the numerous barriers to this effective use. For adults these barriers include lack of awareness of PrEP, insurance or other payment issues, mistrust of a medical system that has discriminated against those at highest risk – gay and bisexual men, transgender people, people who use substances, people of color. Young people face the added barrier of dependence on parents or caregivers for consenting to their medical care.

In an ideal world young people could be open with their parents and expect support with facing any issue. However, many young people are unable to be open with parents about their need for sexual health care. This is particularly the case for sexual and gender minorities who would likely have to out their orientation or gender identity to discuss their HIV risk and risk consequences such as ostracization or being kicked out of their homes. Young people should be afforded the privacy to make decisions to protect themselves and have these sensitive conversations only if and when they are ready. In 2019 the best protection against HIV requires medical intervention and no one should be denied access because of someone's else's decision.

It is vital we make this simple legislative change to allow those at risk for HIV to make a sensible choice to protect themselves.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel P. Davidson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Daniel Davidson, MPH, MSW