



March 18, 2019

Members of the Public Health Committee:

I am writing to you today to request your support for House Bill #6540, legislation designed to support the health of minors who are at risk of exposure to HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus).

The American Academy of HIV Medicine (AAHIVM) is an independent organization of HIV specialists and other care providers dedicated to promoting excellence in HIV care. Our members — over 1500 of physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, physician assistants and pharmacists — provide direct care to the majority of HIV patients in the US.

According to the CDC¹, nearly 39,000 Americans were diagnosed with HIV in 2016 (most recent data available). Of these, one in five were between the ages of 13 and 24. This is not surprising, given that young people also experience disproportionately high levels of other sexually transmitted diseases (STD) as well as unintended pregnancies. Our country's youth, on the whole, are clearly underserved with regard to the tools and education they need to protect their sexual and reproductive health adequately and consistently.

With regard to Connecticut, State Health Department data show that 34% of residents living with HIV in 2017 were young people². It is also notable that the number of HIV diagnoses in Connecticut rose by 4% in 2017³.

Passage of House Bill #6540 (an Act Concerning the Prevention of HIV) responds to this public health challenge by allowing Connecticut health care providers to prescribe PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) to minors who disclose that they are at risk of HIV exposure and wish to use it.

Approved by the FDA in 2010, PrEP is daily medication (usually in pill form) that reduces the user's risk of acquiring HIV if exposed by over 92%. While condom use is also highly effective in preventing HIV, it is already evident that condoms are not used consistently by most people and, thus, additional protective options are needed. PrEP, in communities where it readily avail-

¹ https://authoring.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DPH/AIDS--Chronic-Diseases/Surveillance/statewide/CT_HIV_factsheet.pdf

² https://authoring.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DPH/AIDS--Chronic-Diseases/Surveillance/statewide/CT_HIV_factsheet.pdf

³ <https://www.wtnh.com/news/health/hiv-cases-rise-in-connecticut/1730214592>

able and promoted, has been shown to be highly effective in preventing HIV and widely acceptable because it is user-controlled and undetectable by a partner.

House Bill #6540 essentially parallels the provision of contraceptive pills and emergency contraception to minors without parental consent. In both cases, youth seeking to protect their health are allowed to obtain and use the protection they need without parental involvement, if necessary.

While providing access to PrEP to young people, the bill will also support their access to family planning and STI prevention generally, simply in the course of the regular check-ups required of all PrEP users.

Permitting PrEP access to minors in need of it can also be expected to counter some of the upward trend in Connecticut's HIV diagnoses. As the Academy members can affirm, it will also contribute to the health of these new patients in the future simply by allowing them, early in life, to work with trusted health care providers proactively and without stigma. This experience can enhance their ability to care for their health and prevent illnesses later.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter. Please feel free to contact the Academy if you have questions about the medical impacts that passage of H.B. No. 6540 would likely have on your state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Packett, II", written over a light gray rectangular background.

Bruce J. Packett, II
Executive Director

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