

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

By Meredith Williams, 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 a pediatrician with over 23 years of experience working at a large urban federally qualified health center serving New Haven and its surrounding communities. I have dedicated my entire career to the children and families of this community over the course of several generations, and I have witnessed tremendous improvement in many areas of health disparity. In particular, health care access for adolescents has improved tremendously which has positively impacted risk reduction in this vulnerable age group. We have seen a decline in teenage pregnancy and increases in graduation rates from high school.

I believe the proposed bill is important because it is a necessary update to existing state law requiring minors to obtain parental consent to obtain preventative treatment for HIV infection. Currently, minors may receive HIV treatment once infected without parental consent, but they cannot independently consent to preventative treatment or pre-exposure prophylaxis, referred to as PrEP. PrEP consists of a daily prescription medication in a pill form. When taken daily, the pill (brand name Truvada) reduces the risk of contracting HIV infection by up to 92%. This bill would ensure that youth at risk for HIV have direct access to this medication for prevention before they are burdened with life-long illness and treatment.

Confounding this issue further is the fact that HIV related testing and treatment remains stigmatized, and youth that would benefit most from this treatment are unable to access it due to fear of parental rejection. It is unfortunate but true that non-conforming sexual orientation is strongly associated with homelessness in the adolescent population. An Act Concerning the Prevention of HIV would implement a targeted provision to address this harmful gap by adding language to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 19a-592.

As a pediatrician, I strongly believe in anticipatory guidance, a term synonymous with risk reduction. Our core mission as pediatricians is prevention, producing a healthy and empowered young adult population. We envision PrEP as a critical tool in reducing the significant public health burden of HIV and need your help to accomplish access.

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I strongly support H.B. 6540 and I urge you to vote favorably for this important bill. No young person should 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,

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