

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

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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 medical provider in a School-Based Health Center as part of Cornell-Scott Hill Health Center.

I work in a high school, my patients are all adolescents from a diverse population. They come for various medical reasons. They are able to obtain confidential care in a location that provides easy, safe access. The students who come to me that might need HIV prevention services are often not ready to share this information with their guardians. This puts them at higher risk for exposure if they are unable to obtain PreP, if it is indicated in their situation.

Stigma, homophobia, and privacy concerns pose obstacles to HIV related testing and treatment for youth. Many of the youth who would most benefit from PrEP are unable to access it due to fear of parental rejection. Allowing youth to consent would foster trusting relationships between young people and adult providers by opening new avenues for preventative care. Providers may also serve as entry points to resources and support for talking to family members or other trusted adults about issues related to HIV, sexual health, and identity.

I believe the proposed bill is important because it is an opportunity to prevent future HIV infections. As much as I would prefer for all of my teens to be abstinent, it is just not the case. I am there for them and this is one hurdle that is not accessible to us at this time. It is always amazing to me the trust the students impart to their medical providers and this would be another tool to help keep our teens protected.

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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