

Committee: Health and Government Operations Committee

Bill number: House Bill 127 - Public Health - Nonoccupational Postexposure Prophylaxis (nPEP) Standing Order Program - Establishment

Hearing Date: January 31, 2024

Position: Support

The Women's Law Center of Maryland supports *House Bill 127 – Public Health – Nonoccupational Postexposure Prophylaxis (nPEP) Standing Order Program – Establishment*. If enacted, the legislation would remove barriers for people obtaining PEP, an essential medication that reduces the risk of HIV infection. Increased access to PEP is critical for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence, as they are at heightened risk for HIV.

Under Maryland's current law, individuals can only obtain PEP through a prescription from a prescriber. When people are marginalized from the health care system, this requirement can be an almost insurmountable barrier to obtaining timely medication. PEP must be taken within 72 hours of HIV exposure to be effective.

The legislation would remove barriers to PEP by allowing pharmacists and non-clinicians in community programs to dispense PEP under a standing order. A standing order is a written agreement between a prescriber and other individual to dispense medication. This arrangement would allow an individual to obtain PEP from a pharmacy or a community-based program, including mobile crisis clinics. The individuals would then also be linked to a health care provider for ongoing services.

We ask for a favorable report. If any further information would be helpful, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net.