

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2017 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**Enrolled - Revised**

Senate Bill 110

(Senator Conway)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Health and Government Operations

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**Public Health - Expedited Partner Therapy - Trichomoniasis and Pharmacist  
Dispensing**

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This bill adds trichomoniasis to the conditions for which antibiotic therapy can be provided to an individual under the State’s expedited partner therapy (EPT) protocols. The bill also explicitly authorizes a licensed pharmacist to dispense antibiotic therapy prescribed to any sexual partner of a patient diagnosed with chlamydia, gonorrhea, or trichomoniasis under EPT protocols.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) can update EPT regulations within existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

**Local Effect:** Although the bill authorizes EPT to encompass trichomoniasis, it does not materially affect local health department finances.

**Small Business Effect:** Potential minimal.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** Chapter 183 of 2015 modified the existing Baltimore City Expedited Partner Therapy Pilot Program to make the provision of EPT a permanent option and authorize the use of EPT throughout Maryland. Under Chapter 183, physicians, advanced practice registered nurses with prescriptive authority, physician assistants, and certain registered nurses employed by local health departments may prescribe, dispense, or otherwise provide antibiotic therapy to any sexual partner of a patient diagnosed with chlamydia or gonorrhea without making a physical assessment of the patient’s partner.

Per *Code of Maryland Regulations* 10.06.07, a separate prescription must be issued for each partner, and the designation “EPT” or “Expedited Partner Therapy” must be included on the face of each prescription issued. Such a written designation is sufficient for a pharmacist to fill the prescription when the partner’s name is unknown and not included on the prescription. A pharmacist dispensing an EPT prescription must provide educational information for each partner, including (1) advice for the partner to seek a medical evaluation; (2) information about chlamydia and gonorrhea; (3) medication instructions; (4) warnings about adverse drug or allergic reactions; and (5) advice to abstain from sexual activity as required during treatment.

**Background:** EPT is the practice of providing antibiotic therapy to the sexual partners of persons diagnosed with sexually transmitted infections without an intervening medical evaluation. EPT is intended to reduce the likelihood of repeat infection in the initial patient and prevent the further spread of infection to others. EPT is not a mandatory practice nor is it intended to replace traditional partner notification and management. EPT provides an option for treating partners who are unlikely or unable to seek medical care. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identify EPT as a central component to preventing and controlling sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in the United States.

Trichomoniasis is caused by infection with the protozoan parasite *Trichomonas vaginalis*. According to CDC, trichomoniasis is the most common curable STD in the United States; an estimated 3.7 million people have the infection. Trichomoniasis can increase the risk of getting or spreading other sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Pregnant women with trichomoniasis are also more likely to have preterm delivery and low birth weight babies. Three other states with EPT (Alabama, Michigan, and Wisconsin) include treatment for trichomoniasis (with the antibiotic metronidazole or tinidazole) in their EPT protocols.

According to DHMH, in 2015, 27,450 cases of chlamydia and 6,858 cases of gonorrhea were reported to the State or local health departments, making them the two most common reportable infections in Maryland. In women, untreated chlamydia infection can progress to serious reproductive and other health problems, while complications among men are rare. Left untreated, gonorrhea can cause serious and permanent health problems in both women and men.

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## Additional Information

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - January 30, 2017  
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