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**HB 652**

February 27, 2020

**TO:** Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee

**FROM:** Nicholas Blendy, Deputy Director of Government Relations

**RE:** House Bill 652 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance – Specialty Drugs - Definition

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill – HB652.

Approximately 1.1 million people in the United States are living with HIV.<sup>1</sup> In Baltimore, over 12,460 individuals are estimated to be living with HIV, with one in 33 men and one in 73 women affected.<sup>2</sup> Currently, 37% of those newly infected with HIV are 30 years old and younger.<sup>3</sup>

HIV treatment is essential in treating this disease. What was once a death sentence is now a chronic disease due to incredible medical advancements. If diagnosed early, those living with HIV can have a near normal lifespan, equivalent to those who are HIV negative, if they have access to quality, life-saving medications. HIV medications are life-saving, and have transformed a disease that had no known treatment, to one that can be managed and controlled for the course of the lifespan.

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<sup>1</sup> Basic Statistics. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/statistics.html>. Accessed February 25, 2020

<sup>2</sup> Baltimore City Annual HIV Epidemiological Profile 2018. Center for HIV Surveillance, Epidemiology and Evaluation, Maryland Department of Health, Baltimore, MD. 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Baltimore City Annual HIV Epidemiological Profile 2018. Center for HIV Surveillance, Epidemiology and Evaluation, Maryland Department of Health, Baltimore, MD. 2019.

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HIV drugs cost approximately \$39,000 per year in the US.<sup>4</sup> Drugs used to treat HIV should not be considered specialty drugs, and insurers including nonprofit health service plans and health maintenance organizations should not impose copayment and coinsurance requirements on them.

This bill offers a key opportunity to help end the HIV epidemic by making life-saving medication more affordable to patients. By removing their specialty label, this bill also de-stigmatize HIV treatment and promote that HIV is a manageable, chronic disease.

For the foregoing reasons, we respectfully request a **favorable** report on House Bill 652.

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<sup>4</sup> Rosenberg, Tina. HIV Drugs Cost \$75 in Africa, \$39,000 in the US. Does It Matter? <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/18/opinion/pricing-hiv-drugs-america.html>. Accessed February 25, 2020.