

Stephen A. Berry, MD PhD
Vice-Chair for Quality and Safety,
Department of Medicine
Associate Professor of Medicine
Johns Hopkins School of Medicine

Division of Infectious Diseases
725 N. Wolfe St / Office 217
Baltimore, MD 21205
443-287-4841 / Fax 410-502-5029
sberry8@jhmi.edu



February 8, 2022

Dear Senators,

Preventing the spread of HIV remains a critical public health problem in Maryland, particularly for persons with limited access to healthcare providers. Urban communities and rural communities in Western Maryland and on the Eastern Shore may be the most impacted.

Pre-exposure (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) are powerful tools to prevent HIV transmission, but the success of these tools is limited by accessibility. Like all preventive health tools, people will be more inclined to use PrEP and PEP if they can be initiated conveniently and quickly. A long drive or bus ride to a clinic with a wait to be seen by a provider is a high barrier for someone who is healthy and busy working and/or raising a family.

In the case of HIV prevention tools, privacy is also essential. HIV clinics, which often prescribe PrEP and PEP to persons who do not have HIV, are known by name in the community. During my fifteen years-experience as an HIV provider, many patients have told me how they avoided first coming to an HIV clinic for years because they worried others would find out.

Allowing pharmacists to prescribe and dispense PrEP and PEP may greatly expand the number of access points in communities throughout the state. People go to pharmacies for all number of reasons, and can thus feel their privacy will be protected.

The medicines used for PrEP and PEP in 2022 are very safe. Moreover, pharmacists have a decades-long track record of prescribing and monitoring other medications under appropriate standards. A good example is the anti-coagulation drug warfarin, which, from a medical standpoint, carries much more risk than do PrEP and PEP medicines.

Senate Bill 0355 will provide an important way to expand access and use of HIV PrEP and PEP in Maryland. I urge the General Assembly to adopt this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "S.A. Berry". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Stephen A. Berry, MD PhD
Associate Professor of Medicine