



2526 SAINT PAUL STREET
BALTIMORE, MD 21218
TEL (410) 625-LGBT (5428)
FAX (410) 625-7423
www.freestate-justice.org

C.P. Hoffman
Policy Director
cphoffman@freestate-justice.org

January 28, 2022

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Testimony of FreeState Justice
IN SUPPORT OF
SB19: Pharmacists – Administration of Maintenance Injectable
Medications – Treatment of Sexually Transmitted Infections**

To the Honorable Chair Paul Pinsky, Vice Chair Cheryl Kagan, and esteemed members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

FreeState Justice is Maryland’s lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) civil rights advocacy organization. Each year, we provide free legal services to dozens, if not hundreds, of LGBTQ+ Marylanders who could not otherwise be able to afford an attorney, as well as advocate more broadly on behalf of the LGBTQ+ community.

We write today in support of Senate Bill 19, which clarifies Maryland’s existing law permitting pharmacists under limited circumstances to administer “maintenance injectable medications” to patients by making clear that “maintenance injectable medication” includes treatments for sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Maintenance injectables are of growing importance in the treatment and prevention of a number of STIs, including HIV, gonorrhea, and syphilis.

With increased many STIs increasingly resistant to traditional oral antibiotics, injectable antibiotics have taken on new importance in treatment. Though initial injections are often performed by medical providers, patients with severe cases may be prescribed an ongoing regimen of injections to be completed at home. Ensuring that these patients receive their full regimen of treatments is a matter of public health and disease prevention. SB19 will help ensure that patients are able to receive—and doctors are confident prescribing—the medication best suited to their treatment.

Maintenance injectable medications also serve an increasingly vital role in the treatment and prevention of HIV. In January 2021, the Food and Drug

Administration approved Cabenuva, the first extended-release injectable treatment for HIV+ adults.¹ In lieu of existing antiretroviral regimens—which must be taken taken—patients prescribed Cabenuva are instead able to take a single extended-release injection once a month. While on Cabenuva, patients do not need to take other pills or receive other treatments for HIV, while maintaining an undetectable (and, thus, untransmittable)² viral load.

Similarly, in December 2021, the FDA approved Apretude, the first extended-release injectable designed for pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to HIV.³ When taken as prescribed, PrEP is highly effective at preventing HIV infection. Injectable PrEP promises to extend these benefits much more broadly, as patients will need only a single injection every two months instead of daily pills.

In both the treatment and prevention, however, these injectables are only useful if they are available. Unfortunately, the nature of maintenance medications is that sometimes prescriptions run out before an individual is able to see their doctor again. In these situations, where a maintenance injectable medication has already been prescribed by a medical provider, pharmacists should be permitted to continue administering those medications.

Denying maintenance treatments hurts not only the individual living with an STI, but also broader public health efforts to combat STI transmission in the first place.

For these reasons, FreeState Justice urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 19.

¹ FDA News Release, “FDA Approves First Extended-Release Injectable Drug Regimen for Adults Living with HIV” (Jan. 21, 2021), *available at* <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-approves-first-extended-release-injectable-drug-regimen-adults-living-hiv>.

² National Institutes of Health Media Advisory, “The Science Is Clear: With HIV, Undetectable Equals Untransmittable” (Jan. 10, 2019), *available at* <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/science-clear-hiv-undetectable-equals-untransmittable>.

³ FDA News Release, “FDA Approves First Injectable Treatment for HIV Pre-Exposure Prevention” (Dec. 20, 2021), *available at* <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-approves-first-injectable-treatment-hiv-pre-exposure-prevention>.