

ORAL Testimony for SB0634: Health Insurance – Home Test Kits for Sexually Transmitted Diseases – Required Coverage

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Thank you for allowing me to testify today

The Problem: As most of you know, sexually transmitted infections are epidemic in the U.S. and in Maryland. CDC estimates there one million cases occur per day in the US.

In MD there were nearly 38,000 cases of chlamydia, 11,500 cases of gonorrhea and 800 cases of syphilis in 2019, as well as 724 people diagnosed with HIV infection in 2020.

These infections are associated with severe sequelae.

Considerations: New molecular diagnostics have permitted individuals to collect their own specimens in a clinic, or even at home.

Please differentiate between **home-testing**, which is performance of the test at home (HIV) and **home-collection**, which is for collection of urogenital swabs at home for mail-in to a laboratory for testing.

SOLUTIONS: Many (>10) commercial companies have developed on-line recruitment of individuals to collect urogenital samples for STIs or blood for HIV tests. These services are not covered by insurance.

Some Universities like our IWANTTHEKIT at Hopkins developed such programs which are offered as public health testing for free. We have tested over **20,000** genital, rectal, and oropharyngeal specimens from **>10,000 participants 14 years** and older since **2004**.

IWTK has been funded by NIH grants, occasionally by the State of MD, and recently (2019) by the Baltimore City Health Department. Baltimore residents can also order a free home test-yourself HIV test. Tests are not covered by insurance. Sustainability is a future issue.

During COVID-19 (221.3) compared to pre-COVID-19 (29.7) IWTK increased **645%**. **In the last 30 days we performed 1,016 tests from 714 kits.**

In Conclusion: Making these tests collected outside of a clinic billable to insurance by law would be game changing.

Passing SB 0634 will enable more persons with insurance to get tested for STIs.