



**HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS TESTIMONY  
IN SUPPORT OF  
SB 355 – Criminal Law – HIV Prevention Drugs - Prescribing and Dispensing by  
Pharmacists and Insurance Requirements  
House Health and Government Operations Committee  
March 24, 2022**

**Health Care for the Homeless strongly supports SB 355.** This bill reduces the barriers to people accessing post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to prevent HIV infection. For people enrolled in Medicaid or with commercial insurance, the removal of prior authorization requirements means a much greater chance someone will access the medication in a timely manner. This is especially important for PEP which must be initiated within 72 hours of exposure to be effective.

The federal government has recommended for almost two decades the use of PEP to prevent the transmission of HIV to infants at child birth, to people who engage in unprotected sex with an anonymous partner, and to people who share syringes. It is also a necessary medication to victims of sexual assault and sex workers who are unknowingly or unintentionally exposed.

In addition, SB 355 will provide clarity regarding the prohibition on public and private insurance on establishing cost-sharing on PrEP related ancillary services. These services go hand in hand with the use of PrEP and must not be difficult to for people to access. When used appropriately, PrEP can reduce the risk of contracting HIV by 99%.

Access to PrEP is a huge health equity issue given the massive racial disparities in new infections and utilization of PrEP. Clients at Health Care for the Homeless can find waiting for authorization a barrier that results in poor health outcomes. We also believe the limitations and requirements in the bill on pharmacists and their ability to prescribe and dispense these life-saving drugs are appropriate and do not put people at risk.

For these reasons, we urge the committee to give SB 355 a favorable report.

*Health Care for the Homeless is Maryland's leading provider of integrated health services and supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. We work to prevent and end homelessness for vulnerable individuals and families by providing quality, integrated health care and promoting access to affordable housing and sustainable incomes through direct service, advocacy, and community engagement. We deliver integrated medical care, mental health services, state-certified addiction treatment, dental care, social services, and housing support services for over 10,000 Marylanders annually at sites in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. For more information, visit [www.hchmd.org](http://www.hchmd.org).*