



Date: January 30, 2023

To: The Honorable Melony Griffith, Chair

From: Aliyah N. Horton, FASAE, CAE, Executive Director, MPhA, 240-688-7808

Cc: Senate, Finance Committee

Re: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT SB 64 – HIV Prevention Drugs - Prescribing and Dispensing by Pharmacists and Insurance Requirements

The Maryland Pharmacists Association (MPhA) supports the passage of SB 64, which would authorize pharmacists to prescribe post-exposure HIV prevention drugs.

Ending the HIV epidemic is a national goal. According to the Journal of the American Pharmacists Association, reducing HIV transmissions by 90% within the next 8 years requires: expanded HIV testing; antivirals for persons infected with HIV; and scale-up of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) medications to prevent new infections.

- HIV PEP medication is emergency medication. Pharmacies are well-suited to provide treatment medications within the required 72-hour window after possible exposure.
- Pharmacists and community pharmacies are easily accessible and already assist with a variety of issues related to general health and medication adherence.
- A pharmacy-setting is considered largely free of HIV-related stigma.
- COVID-19 has increased the experience and operational efficiencies in pharmacies related to point-of-care testing and treatment.
- 10 states have direct prescribing authority for HIV PEP medication including: California, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Maine, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah and Virginia.

MPhA believes the bill could be modified to improve its efficacy in the field:

Require payment for pharmacist clinical services:

- The bill recognizes pharmacists as providers of a critical public health care need. Pharmacists should have the authority to bill for the reimbursement of their time for testing, counseling, prescribing and follow-up.
- While Medicaid and most private insurance providers cover the prescribing of PEP, it is not a requirement for them to cover it when pharmacists initiate the treatments.

Modify testing language:

- Remove ability for patients to opt-out of HIV test prior to prescribing, to avoid polypharmacy and medication resistance.
- Authorize pharmacists to order and administer HepB tests at point-of-care. The antiretrovirals in PEP also treat HepB. If a patient starts treatment and abruptly stops, there are serious implications.

Education and training:

- Financial assistance education is beyond a scope of a practice act revision.

MARYLAND PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION

Founded in 1882, MPhA is the only state-wide professional society representing all practicing pharmacists in Maryland. Our mission is to strengthen the profession of pharmacy, advocate for all Maryland pharmacists and promote excellence in pharmacy practice.