



# THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

**BILL:** Senate Bill 246 – Public Health – Nonoccupational Postexposure Prophylaxis (nPEP) Standing Order Program – Establishment

**SPONSOR:** Chair, Finance Committee (By Request – Departmental – Health)

**HEARING DATE:** January 30, 2024

**COMMITTEE:** Finance

**CONTACT:** Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

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**POSITION:** SUPPORT

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The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 246**, which establishes the Nonoccupational Postexposure Prophylaxis (nPEP) Standing Order Program. The program allows authorized pharmacists to dispense nPEP, a medication to reduce the risk of contracting HIV after potential exposure, following CDC guidelines and in accordance with a standing order.

Improving access to nPEP, a drug known to effectively prevent HIV infection following exposure, will decrease the HIV burden in Maryland and reduce disparities in new infections. Prince George's County supports Maryland joining twelve other states (Arkansas, California, Colorado, Illinois, Maine, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Utah, and Virginia) in authorizing pharmacists to dispense nPEP to eligible residents.<sup>1</sup>

**HIV nPEP is highly effective in preventing HIV infection if it is administered within 72 hours of potential exposure.** In fact, nPEP is more effective the sooner it is administered following exposure.<sup>2</sup> Accessing nPEP through the traditional medical system can be challenging due to limited hours, difficulty getting appointments, and challenges with transportation. In contrast, community pharmacies are highly accessible; 90% of the U.S. population lives within 5 minutes

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<sup>1</sup> National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors, *Pharmacist Authority to Initiate PrEP & PEP and Participate in Collaborative Practice Agreements*. August 10, 2023. <https://nastad.org/resources/pharmacist-authority-initiate-prep-pep-and-participate-collaborative-practice-agreements>

<sup>2</sup> US Department of Health & Human Services, *Post-Exposure Prophylaxis*. Updated November 15, 2023. <https://www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/hiv-prevention/using-hiv-medication-to-reduce-risk/post-exposure-prophylaxis/>

of a pharmacy.<sup>3</sup> Many pharmacies have extended hours beyond those of the traditional medical system, making them well-positioned to administer nPEP, a highly time-sensitive treatment.

Access to nPEP is also an equity issue. In Prince George's County, over 8,000 people are living with HIV, and there were 258 new HIV diagnoses in 2022.<sup>4</sup> Over 90% of new HIV cases in Maryland in 2022 occurred among racial/ethnic minorities.<sup>5</sup> Minority populations experience significant barriers to accessing the traditional healthcare system in comparison to non-Hispanic white residents.<sup>6</sup> Allowing pharmacists to dispense nPEP will help reduce barriers to accessing timely treatment, ultimately, improving health equity.

Prince George's County commends MDH's efforts to ensure pharmacists provide nPEP while remaining connected to the traditional doctor-patient relationship. Senate Bill 246 includes requirements for pharmacists to notify the patient's primary care provider after dispensing nPEP. If the patient does not have a primary care provider, the pharmacist must provide a list of primary care providers and clinics for follow-up within the traditional medical system. This will help ensure quality and continuity of care for the patient.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 246** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.

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<sup>3</sup> Berenbrok et. al. *Access to community pharmacies: A nationwide geographic information systems cross-sectional analysis*. Journal of the American Pharmacists Association. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.japh.2022.07.003>

<sup>4</sup> Maryland Department of Health, Center for HIV Surveillance, Epidemiology and Evaluation, *HIV Priority Populations*. 2022.

<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/maryland.department.of.health.hiv.surveillance/viz/MarylandHIVPriorityPopulations/Dashboard1>

<sup>5</sup> Maryland Department of Health, Center for HIV Surveillance, Epidemiology and Evaluation, *HIV In Maryland*, 2022. Updated September 2023. <https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/OIDEOR/CHSE/pages/statistics.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> The Commonwealth Fund, *Achieving Racial and Ethnic Equity in U.S. Health Care*. November 18, 2021.

<https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/scorecard/2021/nov/achieving-racial-ethnic-equity-us-health-care-state-performance>