

## Favorable Testimony in Support of Expanding Access to HIV Prevention Drugs

Good morning,

My name is Sharon Coker and I am the **Executive Director of SLK Health Services Corporation**, a 501c (3) community-based organization focused on HIV prevention, psychosocial support, and treatment for people living with HIV. I live in **District 23**, a community that continues to carry one of the highest rates of new HIV infections in Maryland. In my district, too many neighbors remain at risk — not because prevention doesn't exist, but because access is delayed, complicated, or wrapped in stigma.

I strongly support this legislation to allow pharmacists to prescribe PrEP, ensure Medicaid covers FDA-approved HIV prevention drugs, and eliminate prior authorization, step therapy, and cost-sharing. These barriers create delays — and in HIV prevention, delay can mean infection.

But access alone is not enough. Implementation must include **mandatory cultural humility training** for pharmacists and providers. No one seeking PrEP or PEP should feel judged, interrogated, or shamed for protecting their health.

Let me be clear: taking PrEP is not a moral failure — it is a public health success. People should never be stigmatized because of what they are prescribed. Prevention is responsible. Prevention is proactive. Prevention saves lives.

By requiring the State Board of Pharmacy to develop a notification plan and convene a workgroup, we have the opportunity to ensure this is done safely, equitably, and with dignity at the center.

I urge the committee to give this bill a favorable report. **The question is not whether prevention works — it does. The question is whether we are willing to make it accessible with dignity.**

Thank you.