

April 23, 2025

Testimony of Emily Miller, CHES, LSX

**In Support of LD 1687, An Act to Clarify and Increase Access to HIV Prevention Medications**

Committee Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson and Honorable Members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services:

My name is Emily Miller, and I am a social worker based in southern Maine. I am writing in strong support of LD 1687, which will broaden access to HIV prevention medications and build capacity within our pharmacy system to better serve individuals at risk of HIV.

As a professional that has worked directly with high-risk individuals throughout the state, I have witnessed firsthand the financial barriers that prevent people from accessing critical HIV preventative medications. This is particularly urgent as Maine is responding to an ongoing HIV outbreak in Bangor, underscoring the need for expanded prevention efforts across the state.

Additionally, we are facing the unfortunate reality of critical federal HIV prevention programs being eliminated or underfunded, which further exacerbates gaps in care. This makes it even more essential that we take every step at the state level to reduce barriers and ensure equitable access to prevention and care. LD 1687 does precisely that by improving coverage for HIV prevention medications, including oral PrEP and long-acting injectables, and compensating pharmacies for their role in administering these vital medications.

Increasing medication coverage is a critical step toward ensuring that individuals have access to the tools that work best for them. Long-acting injectables, for example, are an essential option for individuals who may face challenges with daily adherence to pills, such as those experiencing housing instability, cognitive impairments, or other barriers to daily medication management. By making these options available, we ensure that individuals at risk of HIV can choose the prevention method that best fits their lifestyle and needs.

In addition to the clear health benefits, expanding access to PrEP and other prevention methods has a significant economic impact. It is estimated that every HIV infection prevented saves over \$500,000 in lifetime healthcare costs. This not only benefits the individuals at risk but also our state's healthcare system as a whole. By investing in prevention now, we are making a cost-effective investment in the future health of our communities.

We see the critical need for these preventive measures every day and must acknowledge that delays are harming our community. Removing barriers to accessing resources is vital for curbing new infections of HIV, and I urge you to support LD 1687 to ensure that Maine remains a leader in public health and continues to prioritize the health and well-being of its residents.

Thank you for your time and consideration.