

**Mayor and Council Offices**

Mark Dion

Mayor

April 29, 2025



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Testimony of Mayor of the City of Portland, Mark Dion

*Before*

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services

*In Opposition to*

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

April 29, 2025

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson and Honorable Members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony on this important bill.

The Portland Public Health Division strongly supports LD 1687, An Act to Clarify and Increase Access to HIV Prevention Medication. As operators of an HIV prevention clinic serving more than 600 underinsured patients and administering more 1,400 HIV tests in Portland, we witness daily the transformative impact of accessible pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). Our HIV prevention program provided over 230 people with various levels of PrEP services in 2024. These services covered daily oral medication as well as long acting injectable access. This bill strengthens Maine's leadership in HIV prevention by ensuring pharmacies can deliver these life-saving medications effectively and equitably.

LD 1687 addresses critical barriers to implementation of Maine's groundbreaking 2021 legislation, which authorized pharmacists to dispense PrEP and PEP. Specifically, it provides:

- **Fair Reimbursement for Pharmacists:** By recognizing pharmacists as providers and ensuring reimbursement rates align with those of other healthcare professionals for equivalent services, LD 1687 supports the sustainability of pharmacy-based HIV prevention programs, as outlined by the Maine Board of Pharmacy protocols.
- **Coverage for Advanced Medications:** With rapid advancements in HIV prevention, including long-acting injectable PrEP, LD 1687 ensures insurance coverage for these innovative therapies. This is vital for our clinic's patients, many of whom face logistical barriers to frequent medical visits.

The urgency of this legislation cannot be overstated. Maine is grappling with rising HIV cases, including an ongoing outbreak in Penobscot County, while federal funding for HIV prevention programs—through agencies like HRSA and the CDC—faces potential cuts. Our clinic's work, providing both rapid and laboratory HIV testing alongside harm reduction services, and referrals to treatment, underscores the need for robust state-level action. LD 1687 is a cost-effective strategy: preventing one HIV infection saves approximately \$500,000 in lifetime healthcare costs, while protecting countless lives.

PrEP and PEP are proven tools to help end the HIV epidemic, but their impact depends on accessibility. LD 1687 ensures that all Mainers, including our most vulnerable and underinsured populations, can access these medications through pharmacies. We urge your support for this critical public health measure to advance health equity and safeguard our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Dion", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Dion  
Mayor  
City of Portland, Maine