



**TESTIMONY OF GLBTQ LEGAL ADVOCATES & DEFENDERS
IN SUPPORT OF**

**LD 1970, An Act to Amend the Laws Regarding Consent for HIV Testing and Disclosure of
Related Medical Information for Insurance Purposes**

Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services

May 21, 2025

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

GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD Law) is a nonprofit legal organization that works in New England and nationally to create a just society free of discrimination based on gender identity and expression, HIV status, and sexual orientation. GLAD Law has long fought to protect the rights of people with HIV and advocated for policies to end the HIV epidemic, including through founding our AIDS Law Project in 1984. We appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of LD 1970, An Act to Amend the Laws Regarding Consent for HIV Testing and Disclosure of Related Medical Information for Insurance Purposes.

While medical advances are increasingly putting the opportunity to end the HIV epidemic in reach, HIV remains a serious health condition and a critical public health issue in Maine. An HIV outbreak in Penobscot County has seen a dramatic increase in HIV cases – with 24 individuals newly diagnosed with HIV since October 1, 2023 (and the most recent case in late April 2025).¹ By comparison, the county normally sees an average of two cases per year.²

HIV testing is a crucial tool in helping individuals understand their own HIV status and in reducing HIV transmission.³ Nationally as of 2019, an estimated 13 percent of people with HIV did not know they had HIV – and therefore were unable to access the care and treatment needed to stay healthy and prevent transmitting HIV to others.⁴

Even as HIV testing is a critical public health tool, GLAD Law has long prioritized patient privacy and autonomy in HIV testing. LD 1970 eases requirements for providers before conducting an HIV test while – importantly – still requiring that patients are notified that they may receive an HIV test and have an opportunity to decline.

¹ Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, *Penobscot County 2024 HIV Outbreak* (2025), <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/hiv-cluster.shtml>.

² David Ledford, “Number of confirmed HIV cases in Penobscot County since outbreak began rises to 24,” *Spectrum News* (Apr. 29, 2025), <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/me/maine/health/2025/04/29/number-of-confirmed-hiv-cases-in-penobscot-county-since-outbreak-began-rises-to-24>.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Ending HIV Transmission: Test, Treat, and Prevent,” *Vital Signs* (Dec. 2019), <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/test-treat-prevent/index.html>.

⁴ HIV.gov, *HIV Care Continuum* (2025), <https://www.hiv.gov/federal-response/other-topics/hiv-aids-care-continuum>.

GLAD Law respectfully urges members of this committee to support LD 1970.

Sincerely,

Mary Bonauto, Senior Director of Civil Rights & Legal Strategies
Sarah Austin, Staff Attorney
Hannah Hussey, Staff Attorney
GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders, Portland, Maine