



***Testimony in support of LD 1115***  
**An Act to Improve Access to HIV Prevention Medications**

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, my name is Nicole Clegg and I serve as the Senior Vice President of Public Affairs at Planned Parenthood of Northern New England and am pleased to submit testimony in support of LD 1115.

Planned Parenthood of Northern New England provides comprehensive reproductive and sexual health care to more than 14,000 people in Maine at four health centers located in Biddeford, Portland, Sanford and Topsham. People turn to us for affordable, high-quality care including wellness exams, birth control, disease testing and treatment, cancer screenings, abortion care as well as a variety of primary care services. We see everyone who comes to us regardless of ability to pay, and in a typical year, we provide more than \$4 million in free and discounted care to our communities in Maine.

As a mission driven health care provider, we fundamentally believe everyone should be able to get affordable, high quality sexual and reproductive health care in their communities, no matter where they live or how much money they make and we advocate for policies that help make this vision a reality.

In many communities across the country and in Maine, Planned Parenthood health centers are an essential source of comprehensive HIV prevention and education, including counseling and evidence-based innovative prevention options for individuals at high risk. We fully support this legislation as it would help ensure people have access to the medications they need to keep themselves and others healthy.

With the availability of the highly effective HIV prevention tools, PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) and PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis), we can look to a future with renewed hope of ending the HIV epidemic. But that is only a reality if the medications are affordable and accessible to those who need them. We know that many people encounter barriers to this critical care because of a lack of availability, insurance coverage, cost and stigma, which is why policies like LD 1115 are so important.

The legislation is a straightforward and proven approach to help mitigate barriers for people at the greatest risk as the bill would provide for coverage and expand the points of access for PrEP and PEP, helping to bring these treatments into the mainstream, and reduce the stigma associated with STIs and HIV. A stigma that is further exacerbated by racism, anti-LGBTQ discrimination, and other structural barriers. Gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (MSM), particularly those who are Black and Latino, are at greater risk of getting HIV, and Black women are at a higher risk than other women. It's important that everyone, especially

those communities most affected, have access to testing, PrEP and PEP, and other prevention tools.

Stigma, misinformation, and fear all too often prevent people from accessing the medications they need to protect themselves and others. But this stigma is curable, and that's why it is so important for health promotion policies to incorporate HIV prevention into their overall strategy.

Thank you for the opportunity to share PPNNE's support for this important legislation and I urge you to vote *ought to pass* on LD 1115.