

The mission of Fenway Health is to enhance the wellbeing of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community and all people in our neighborhoods and beyond through access to the highest quality health care, education, research and advocacy.

Healthcare is a Right, Not a Privilege.

On World AIDS Day 2016, the Massachusetts Getting to Zero Coalition released the *Massachusetts Comprehensive Plan to Eliminate HIV Discrimination, AIDS Related Deaths, and New HIV Infections*. This document can be accessed at [gettingtozeroma.org](http://gettingtozeroma.org).

### **2019-2020 State Legislative Priorities**

#### HIV/AIDS related legislation

**(H1954, S1237) *An Act relative to HIV prevention access for young adults*** (Rep. Lewis and Sen. Cyr)

The current statute permits minors to consent to healthcare for many stigmatized services including treatment of STIs & HIV, but not prevention services such as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). This bill adds prevention services to the healthcare minors may consent to without parental permission, removing a significant barrier to critical care. In July of 2018, the FDA approved the use of PrEP for minors and recommended its use for those at risk of HIV infection.

**(H1712) *An Act relative to preventing overdose deaths and increasing access to treatment*** (Rep. Fernandes)

A safer drug consumption program provides a space for people who use drugs to consume pre-obtained drugs under the supervision of healthcare professionals or other trained staff and may provide other related services including but not limited to needle exchange, overdose prevention, and referrals to treatment and other services.

**(H624, S364) *An Act relative to Massachusetts home care eligibility*** (Rep. Peake and Sen. Jehlen)

As people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) are living longer and aging, some are also experiencing early onset of age-related illness and impairment. The bill would expand access to homecare services before the age of 60 to address health needs of long term survivors.

**(H1926, S1208) *An Act Relative to End of Life Options*** (Rep. Kafka and Sen. Brownsberger)

At one time, an HIV/AIDS diagnosis meant days, weeks, or months of excruciating and debilitating conditions before death. While people currently living with HIV/AIDS now can live long and healthy lives, we support the right of those in a similar conditions due to other illnesses to have the opportunity to safely self-administer lethal medication. This bill gives qualified terminally ill patients the right to obtain a prescription for medication that they may choose to self-administer for a humane and dignified death.

**(H1955, S1303) *An Act improving Hepatitis C screening*** (Rep. Lewis and Sen. Montigny)

Currently screening requirements for Hepatitis C (HCV) only apply to those born between 1945 and 1965, also known as the baby boomers. Due to the large increase of new HCV infections, especially amongst young people and people who inject drugs (PWID), this bill would expand that screening protocol to include anyone over the age of 18.

#### LGBTQ related legislation

**(H140) *An Act Relative to Abusive Practices to Change Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Minors*** (Rep. Khan)

Sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts — also known as conversion or reparative therapy — treat homosexuality and transgender identity as mental disorders. This bill bans licensed professionals from providing fraudulent and often abusive practices that purport to change a minor's same-sex attraction or gender identity.

**(H410, S263) *An Act Relative to Healthy Youth*** (Rep. O'Day and Rep. Brodeur)

Currently there are no uniform standards for sexual health education in Massachusetts and many students are never educated about sexual health and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. This bill requires each

school district or public school that offers sexual health education to provide medically accurate and LGBTQ inclusive education including healthy relationships, contraceptive use, and sexually transmitted infections.

**(H1341, S905) *An Act to collect data on LGBTQI prisoners held in restrictive housing*** (Rep. Balser and Sen. Cyr)

Although LGBTQI prisoners are often placed in restrictive housing for their purported protection, restrictive housing does not protect them from harm. LGBTQI people are sent to restrictive housing more frequently than the general population. This bill will require state and county correctional facilities to collect data on voluntarily disclosed sexual orientation and gender identity of prisoners placed in restrictive housing.

#### Housing related legislation

**(H3066, S2043) *An Act to Provide Identification to Homeless Youth and Families*** (Rep. Khan, Sen. Chandler)

Obtaining a state identification card is a critical first step for youth and adults experiencing homelessness to accomplish typical life tasks and access opportunities. This bill calls on the Registry of Motor Vehicles to waive the \$25 fee for Mass IDs for applicants who are experiencing homelessness, and to accept alternative verifications of Massachusetts residency from state agencies and social service agencies.

**(H1314, S816) *An Act providing a bill of rights for people experiencing homelessness*** (Rep. Pignatelli)

People experiencing homelessness often are subjected to discrimination and mistreatment based on their housing status. The bill of rights is a guide for state and local officials emphasizing that people experiencing homelessness are entitled to the same rights as any other resident of Massachusetts: the right to move freely in public spaces, the right to equal treatment by municipal agencies (such as police departments), freedom from discrimination in employment, the right to emergency medical care, the right to register to vote and to vote, freedom from disclosure of records, and the right to a reasonable expectation of privacy of property.

**(H1264) *An Act to further provide a rental arrearage program*** (Rep. Decker)

People who are unhoused or unstably housed often cannot build up savings, pursue education, maintain good health, or adequately feed themselves and their children. In addition, those facing housing instability frequently find themselves on the brink of falling behind on rent or mortgage payments, which can then lead to eviction, and force a household into homelessness. This bill would fund a new resource to provide the necessary, swift assistance to remain in their homes.