

July 11, 2022

FY23 Budget Conference Committee members

Chair Michael Rodrigues  
Vice Chair Cindy Friedman  
Senator Patrick O'Connor

Chair Aaron Michlewitz  
Vice Chair Ann-Margaret Ferrante  
Representative Todd Smola

**RE: Support for FY23 budget Amendment #263 (to H4700): HIV Prevention Access for Young Adults, sponsored by Representative Jack Patrick Lewis**

Dear Chair Rodrigues, Vice Chair Friedman, Senator O'Connor, Chair Michlewitz, Vice Chair Ferrante, and Representative Smola,

Fenway Health would like to register our support of FY23 budget Amendment #263, filed by Representative Jack Patrick Lewis, regarding HIV prevention access for young adults. This amendment to H4700 was adopted into the Consolidated Amendment #D by the House.

Founded in 1983, AIDS Action currently operates as the public health division of Fenway Health. Its mission is to stop the HIV epidemic and related health inequities by eliminating new infections, maximizing healthier outcomes for those infected and at risk, and tackling the root causes of HIV/AIDS. In 2016, we convened the statewide Massachusetts Getting to Zero Coalition to begin the conversation about what it would actually take to get to zero new HIV infections, zero AIDS-related deaths, and zero stigma in the Commonwealth. After a year of conversation and research, the Coalition released a [blueprint that lays out strategic priorities for ending the epidemic in Massachusetts](#). The report proposes key policy changes to remove barriers to HIV screening, treatment, and prevention.

The first key policy change proposed by the coalition is to codify the expansion of the mature minor law to include preventative treatment, such as PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis: a medicine people at risk for HIV take to prevent getting HIV). The current statute was written before the conception of PrEP and permits minors informed consent to many stigmatized services including treatment of STIs & HIV, but not does not explicitly extend to preventative care. This amendment would update the mature minor rule to ensure that minors who seek HIV preventative care are not turned away, removing a significant barrier to critical care. This language is explicitly amended to not cover vaccines, and only extends access to care for the prevention of HIV.

Barriers to care are more frequently faced by the most vulnerable in our communities. LGBTQ youth who either do not have access to parental consent, because their guardians are no longer caring for them, or do not have access to safe consent, because they are at risk of violence if they reveal their sexuality or identity, are among the most vulnerable. These are the members of the community who this initiative would serve by providing access to necessary healthcare. They are also among the most at risk for HIV, making this preventative measure even more crucial.

# F E N W A Y H E A L T H

While the safety and efficacy profile of PrEP has been well established for several years, in May of 2018 the FDA explicitly expanded the indication for PrEP for use by adolescents, making it the first agent indicated for prevention of HIV in at risk adolescents.

This issue has been on the verge of passage several times; over the years the language has been refined to incorporate feedback from community members to committee chairs. It simply updates the current statute to include the original intent: provide access for vulnerable young people. Please include the policy contained in Amendment #263, filed by Representative Lewis, in your final FY23 budget, and remove barriers to healthcare for at risk youth.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Carl Sciortino  
Executive Vice President of External Relations  
Fenway Health