

June 6, 2023

The Joint Committee on Public Health  
Carrie Richgels, on behalf of Fenway Health  
Public hearing testimony on S.1353 and H.2225 *An Act enabling pharmacists to prescribe, dispense and, administer PrEP*

Thank you, Chair Cyr, Chair Decker, and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to speak today.

Fenway Health would like to go on record IN SUPPORT of S.1353 and H.2225 *An Act enabling pharmacists to prescribe, dispense and, administer PrEP* and we urge you to report this bill favorably.

Fenway Health is a Community Health Center based in Boston, whose mission is to serve the LGBTQIA+ community, those living with HIV/AIDS, the BIPOC community, people who inject drugs, people experiencing homelessness, and those who are vulnerable to health care access inequities.

We are committed to breaking down barriers and working towards the principle that healthcare—and access to it—is a right, not a privilege.

AIDS Action—the Public Health Division of Fenway—houses a Sexual Health and Prevention Outreach program which offers free screening for HIV, hepatitis C, and other common sexually transmitted diseases, such as syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia. We also offer case management and medical referrals.

Our outreach and prevention staff work with communities who face trauma, stigma, and discrimination in healthcare settings—due to their sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, or any combination of these factors.

Overcoming that barrier is something that our staff face regularly, and it is done by meeting people where they are and treating them with dignity and respect. It involves trusting people to engage in healthcare on their terms—this is what leads to sustained involvement in care.

Building this trust with clients and patients is critical to conducting HIV testing and getting people on PrEP. When someone is ready to begin PrEP, it is crucial

that they are able to as soon as possible. This is why the same-day-PrEP program is successful in MA.

A local pharmacy can provide a lower threshold of access and can be a trusted access point for those who may face discrimination in traditional healthcare settings.

Models of clinical and community pharmacist inclusion into HIV practice sites have shown to improve outcomes and adherence.

In 2020, 434 Massachusetts residents were diagnosed with HIV--PrEP is an intervention that works and it is underutilized. Traditional access points have gotten us this far, now we need to think outside of the box and provide as many opportunities as possible for people to get the healthcare they need.

I urge you to report S.1353 and H.2225 favorably. Please continue to consider Fenway Health as a resource in addressing barriers to PrEP access.

I would also like to applaud Senator Rausch and her bill, S.212 regarding access to training on gender affirming care.

Thank you for your time.