

May 3, 2021

Chair Joanne Comerford
Chair Marjorie Decker
Joint Committee on Public Health
State House Rooms 413-C and 130
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02133

RE: Support for H.2349/S.1404 *An Act relative to HIV prevention access for young adults*

Dear Chair Comerford, Chair Decker, and members of the Joint Committee on Public Health,

We would like to register our support of H.2349/S.1404 *An Act relative to HIV prevention access for young adults*, filed by Senator Cyr, Representative Jack Lewis, and Representative Chynah Tyler.

Founded in 1983, AIDS Action currently operates as the public health division of Fenway Health. Its mission is to stop the 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 and modernize 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 and PEP. The current statute permits minors to consent to many stigmatized services including treatment of STIs & HIV, but not does not explicitly extend to preventative care. This bill would update the mature minor rule to ensure that minors who seek HIV preventative care are not turned away due to practitioner uncertainty, removing a significant barrier to critical care. It is worth noting that past versions of this bill raised concerns from those opposed to childhood vaccinations. This language is explicitly amended to not cover vaccines, and only extends access to care for the prevention of HIV, removing that concern.

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 are honest with their guardians about their sexuality or identity, are among the most vulnerable. These are the members of the community who this initiative would uplift and open access to necessary healthcare. They are also among the most at risk for HIV, making this preventative measure even more crucial.

While the safety and efficacy profile of PrEP has been well established for several years, in May 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.

Please support [H.2349/S.1404 An Act relative to HIV prevention access for young adults](#) with a favorable report and remove barriers to healthcare for at risk youth.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Carl Sciortino
Executive Vice President of External Relations
Fenway Health