



SB 335 - HIV Prevention Drugs - Prescribing and Dispensing by Pharmacists and Insurance Requirements

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Position: SUPPORT

We, the board of directors of Annapolis Pride, support SB 0335, The HIV Prevention Act. Annapolis Pride is a grassroots organization that advocates for the LGBTQ+ county residents, their families, and allies.

It was not that long ago that a diagnosis of HIV was a death sentence. Medical professionals, researchers, advocates, and activists have worked hard to change that stark diagnosis. Although no longer terminal, it is still a chronic condition to be managed throughout one's lifetime.

Maryland has made good strides in reducing the number of yearly HIV infections but there are still challenges to be met. At the end of 2020, there were 31,676 people aged 13+ living with diagnosed HIV in Maryland. Maryland was ranked 8th among states and territories in adult/adolescent HIV diagnosis rates (per 100,000) in 2019.

As the Covid-19 numbers decrease and we emerge from the pandemic and isolation, it is not unreasonable to expect an increase in other infection rates as we begin to return to more socialization. But there are existing medications to help prevent an increase in HIV infections. Much of the challenge in preventing the spread of HIV is access to these simple treatments. By extending certain prescribing privileges to pharmacists, we will help streamline access to patients that might otherwise find it difficult to navigate the usual healthcare process.

This also opens the door to directly engage and educate patients through local and trusted pharmacists already in the community.

Through this bill we would allow people easier access to this life saving medication and treatments and help build a healthier Maryland.

We respectfully urge this committee to issue a **favorable report for SB 355**.