

**IN SUPPORT OF: HB 229 – Pharmacists – Administration of Maintenance
Injectable Medications – Treatment of Sexually Transmitted Infections**

Health and Government Operations Committee Hearing 2/3 at 2:30 p.m.

Testimony offered on behalf of myself and my experience as an infectious diseases physician who specializes in prevention and management of HIV and sexually transmitted infections.

Less than 20 years ago, gonorrhea rates in the U.S. were at historic lows and syphilis was close to elimination. This progress has dissolved in recent years. In Maryland's most recent report on sexually transmitted infections, cases rates of gonorrhea increased 50% and primary and secondary syphilis increased 253% from 2010 to 2019. Congenital syphilis, which occurs when a woman is infected with syphilis and goes untreated or is inadequately treated, and can lead to premature birth, still birth, and severe birth defects, has had a near doubling in rates in Maryland in just a few years. Simply put, sexually transmitted infection control is a public health emergency in Maryland.

The standard of care for gonorrhea and syphilis requires the administration of specific injectable antibiotics. Alternative oral medications are less effective and not preferred.

The ability to receive this treatment from pharmacists as outlined in HB 229 is important for many reasons:

1. Many primary care offices do not carry these injectable antibiotics, which creates a barrier to treatment. HB 229 will create broadened access for prescribers to send their patients with a prescription for an injectable antibiotic.
2. Pharmacy access can be more convenient and accessible than a provider office, considering transportation or business hours.
3. Pharmacy access can center patient choice: patients can be treated without the barrier of stigma from visiting an STD clinic.

Finally, HB 229 aligns with several states where pharmacists administer injectable antibiotics. Pharmacists are well prepared to safely manage injections and adverse reactions from their experience in administering vaccines and other medications.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 229.

Sincerely,



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