
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

March 25, 2021

Chair Prusak, Vice-Chairs Hayden and Salinas, and Members of the House Committee on Health Care,

As the statewide advocacy and political voice for Planned Parenthood's two Oregon affiliates, Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon believes no person should experience barriers to accessing sexual and reproductive health care and education. Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon urges strong support for HB 2958, which would expand access to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)-prevention medication, including pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and emergency post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP).

HIV/AIDS remains an important public health problem in Oregon. From 1981 through 2018, 10,566 HIV infections were diagnosed in Oregon residents, and 44% of Oregon residents with HIV died.¹ From 2014 to 2018, approximately 225 new diagnoses were reported each year in Oregon.²

Fortunately, there are options available to people to prevent HIV infection: PrEP, which can reduce the risk of contracting HIV by more than 95 percent when taken daily, and PEP, which can prevent HIV infection if treatment begins within 72 hours of exposure. Oregon Planned Parenthood health centers have prioritized providing PrEP and PEP to help patients reduce their risk of contracting HIV.

Although 73% of people living with HIV in Oregon were White, the average diagnosis rate among Black and African American Oregonians was nearly five times higher than for White Oregonians while the rate of new diagnoses among Hispanics was 1.8 times higher than for Whites.³ These disparities underscore the need to address health inequities within HIV prevention. The CDC estimates that 44% of those who could benefit from PrEP are Black and 25% are Latinx, but less than 1% of those prescribed PrEP are from these communities.⁴

Like many things in health care, accessibility plays a large role in medication utilization. The national estimate is that about 1.1 million Americans overall are at substantial risk for HIV and should be offered PrEP. However, only 90,000 PrEP prescriptions were filled in commercial pharmacies in the year examined.⁵

Licensed pharmacists in Oregon can already prescribe PrEP and PEP. HB 2958 clarifies that pharmacists have the legal authority to conduct an HIV test, order lab tests, and interpret lab results—all of which is required to safely prescribe PrEP. The bill also takes a step towards addressing access issues by aligning Oregon with national standards of care, which prohibits insurance companies from requiring patients to obtain prior authorization before using their insurance benefits to obtain PrEP or PEP. The bill also ensures that pharmacists are reimbursed for fees associated with providing patient consultations for prescribing medications like PrEP, PEP, and birth control. Without this guarantee of reimbursement, it will not be feasible for pharmacists to provide these services and many will not opt to, thereby undercutting pharmacies as an important point of access for these medications.

Eliminating barriers to care will make a huge impact in reducing rates of HIV infection in Oregon. Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon respectfully urges your support of HB 2598.

Sincerely,

An Do
Interim Executive Director
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

¹ Oregon Health Authority (2020), "HIV Infection in Oregon," <https://shredsystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served/le9985.pdf>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ <https://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/newsroom/2018/croi-2018-PrEP-press-release.html>

⁵ Ibid