

September 17, 2025

Joint Committee on Financial Services

Testimony of Fenway Health in Support of H.1245, An Act to address barriers to HIV prevention, and S.717, An Act to strengthen the control of contagious and infectious diseases in the Commonwealth

Dear Senate Chair Feeney, House Chair Murphy, and other members of the Joint Committee on Financial Services:

I am Dr. Kenneth Mayer, Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and Medical Research Director at Fenway Health. I am testifying today in strong support of **H.1245, An Act to address barriers to HIV prevention, and S.717, An Act to strengthen the control of contagious and infectious diseases in the Commonwealth**. These bills would address structural barriers that make it difficult for us to prescribe pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP, for HIV prevention. If we can remove these barriers, we can prevent people from becoming infected with HIV and reduce racial and ethnic disparities in access to PrEP.

Fenway Health is the largest provider of HIV and STI prevention and care in New England, with 2300 people with HIV patients and 3500 patients on PrEP for HIV prevention. The Fenway Institute trains health care providers across the Commonwealth and nationwide in how to use PrEP to reduce individuals' vulnerability to HIV infection.

When I was training in Infectious Diseases at Brigham and Women's Hospital in the early 1980's, I set up a sexual health clinic at Fenway Health, and diagnosed some of the first people with HIV in New England. There has been remarkable progress since then, with breakthroughs in treatment and prevention using antiviral medications. The use of medication by people at risk for HIV is known as pre-exposure prophylaxis or PrEP, which has been a remarkable breakthrough. More recently, we have been involved in studies showing that injectable medication, given as infrequently as twice a year is highly protective against HIV. As a provider who works at the largest provider of HIV prevention and care in New England and the largest LGBTQ+ care provider, it is frustrating that we can't optimize the impact of these prevention innovations because of barriers to accessing PrEP such as prior authorization requirements and copayments. For some of the most vulnerable patients who could benefit the most from injectable PrEP, such people who use drugs and young people of color who are sexually active, cost sharing is a real barrier.

These bills would enable providers at Fenway Health and across Massachusetts to use this effective tool to reduce new HIV infections. Every infection avoided saves about \$1 million in health care costs and lost productivity over an individual's lifetime. We strongly urge you to report **H.1245, S.717, An Act to address barriers to HIV prevention** favorably out of

committee. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at kmayer@fenwayhealth.org. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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