



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Monday, March 13, 2023**

**SB 1068, An Act Concerning The Department Of Public Health's
Recommendations Regarding A Human Immunodeficiency Virus Pre-Exposure
Prophylaxis And Post-Exposure Prophylaxis Drug Assistance Program**

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **SB 1068, An Act Concerning The Department Of Public Health's Recommendations Regarding A Human Immunodeficiency Virus Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis And Post-Exposure Prophylaxis Drug Assistance Program**. CHA supports the bill.

Connecticut hospitals continue to meet the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and are now facing new challenges of treating sicker patients than they saw before the pandemic, with a dedicated but smaller workforce who are exemplary but exhausted. They are also experiencing significant financial hardships brought on by record inflation. Through it all, hospitals have been steadfast, providing high-quality care for everyone who walks through their doors, regardless of ability to pay.

SB 1068 would allow the Department of Public Health (DPH) to provide financial assistance to uninsured and underinsured individuals who need HIV-blocking or HIV-related medications or therapies (specifically, pre-exposure or post-exposure prophylaxis) but who are unable to pay for those medications or therapies. CHA supports the bill and applauds DPH's effort to reduce access barriers for vulnerable populations for this vital and potentially life-saving care.

Beyond this legislation, we ask the legislature (and DPH) to provide more funding and develop additional strategies to improve access to care for all HIV-related testing, medications, care, and supports. Last session, the legislature passed a mandate that practitioners and providers offer every person 13 years old or older an HIV test, with very few exceptions. This is likely to increase the number of individuals who need HIV-related care.

During discussion of that law (when in bill form), there were numerous experts in the field who raised concern that there are not enough specialists or care program resources in many areas of the state to support a potential influx of newly diagnosed HIV-positive patients.

Specifically, the law asks hospitals (starting in 2024) to refer:

“...patients who test positive for the human immunodeficiency virus to **an appropriate health care provider** for treatment of such virus. A hospital may collaborate with a municipal health department, district department of health, regional mental health board, emergency medical services council or community organization in developing and implementing such protocols.”

We ask that there be focused attention by the state to ensure that there are sufficient resources in place so that “an appropriate provider” can be identified and patients have the tools (transportation, coverage, other supports) to access the provider’s care, including that we do not overwhelm the existing specialists in this field.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.