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May 8, 2019

Senator Scott Wiener
State Capitol Building, Room 5100
Sacramento, CA 95814

SB 159 Support

Dear Senator Wiener,

The Health Officers Association of California (HOAC), which represents the physician health officers in California's sixty-one city and county jurisdictions, supports your SB 159, a bill that would authorize trained pharmacists to furnish two HIV preventive medications – PrEP and PEP – and would also remove insurance barriers for those who need these medications.

HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis and Post-exposure Prophylaxis are safe, highly effective, FDA-approved means of HIV prevention through daily medication. They are currently available only through prescription from a physician, nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant.

Public health seeks to create an environment in which all people have access to health and wellbeing. This means eliminating barriers to preventive care. Current barriers to PrEP and PEP access include cost, lack of insurance, wait times for appointments, and stigma that makes many individuals uncomfortable discussing sexual and drug-related risk factors for HIV with their doctors. Availability of PrEP and PEP through pharmacists is likely to decrease wait times for initiation, allow increased opportunities for privacy and confidentiality, and in some cases improve cost- and insurance-related barriers.

PrEP and PEP access are considered among the highest priorities for California's Getting to Zero plan, with more than 220,000 estimated Californians in need of PrEP. Barriers to access through usual healthcare disproportionately impact the same communities with greatest risk of HIV, including low income, uninsured and underinsured, the LGBTQ communities, and communities of color.

Thank you for introducing this important bill.

Sincerely,

Kat DeBurgh, MPH
Executive Director