



To: Representative Dafna Michaelson Janet, House Public & Behavioral Health and Human Services Committee Chair  
Members, House Public & Behavioral Health and Human Services Committee

From: Matt Pagnotti, State & Local Government Relations Director, Vivent Health

Re: Support for HB22-1309 Relating to Hospital Dispensing of STI Prophylaxis to Sexual Assault Survivors

---

Vivent Health appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB22-1309, concerning the authority of hospitals to dispense prophylaxis medications for sexually transmitted infections to sexual assault survivors. We believe that this bill will improve access to effective prevention measures for survivors of sexual assault in Colorado. ***Vivent Health urges the committee to pass HB22-1309 to help remove barriers to HIV post-exposure prophylaxis for vulnerable individuals, especially those in rural or underserved communities.***

Vivent Health (previously Rocky Mountain Cares) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization serving more than 2,100 Coloradans affected by HIV in the Denver and Pueblo areas each year. Our unique integrated, comprehensive model of care brings together medical, dental, and mental health care; clinical and traditional pharmacy services; food pantry and nutrition services; housing assistance; legal aid; and care management and coordination services for people living with HIV. Vivent Health also provides prevention programs, including Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), testing, and harm reduction services to help reduce the transmission of HIV. All the services Vivent Health provides are available regardless of the ability of the people we serve to pay for them, or their insurance status.

Recent and significant advancements have greatly expanded the toolbox of HIV prevention options available to individuals. This includes post-exposure prophylaxis, or PEP, a medication regimen that is highly effective at preventing someone from contracting HIV if started within 72 hours after an exposure. While PEP is a key prevention measure, there are unfortunately a number of barriers that can make it difficult to access for those in need. It can be nearly impossible to be seen by a provider within the required window after exposure, especially if the event occurred over the

weekend. Individuals may also be hesitant to seek out care with their doctor or a local clinic due to fear of receiving stigmatizing treatment.

Thanks to recent state legislation (HB20-1061), Colorado pharmacists now have the authority to prescribe PEP as well. Though this has addressed these issues to some degree, it can still be a race against the clock for an individual to receive PEP medications in time. Besides ensuring the pharmacy is open and appropriately staffed, one may still have to contend with transportation barriers and potential fear of disclosure or stigma.

For those who may need PEP after a traumatic event such as a sexual assault, navigating this complex system can seem insurmountable. HB1309 will allow survivors who receive emergency room treatment at a hospital to receive PEP and other STI preventatives on-site, removing many of the above barriers and helping more vulnerable Coloradans access these critical medications. This will be especially important for those in rural or underserved communities where PEP is extremely difficult to obtain within the necessary window. ***Vivent Health strongly encourages you to support HB22-1309 and help ensure that Coloradan survivors of sexual assault can more easily access the care they need.***