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April 23, 2026

Senator Virginia Lyons, Chair
Vermont Senate Committee on Health and Welfare
155 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05602

RE: Suggested language to address DVHA's concerns and include Medicaid in HIV Amendment of H.611

Dear Chair Lyons and Members of the Committee:

The Office of the Health Care Advocate (HCA) appreciates the concerns raised by the Dept. of Vermont Health Access (DVHA) with respect to the PrEP and PEP HIV Prevention amendment to H.611; however, we believe that *all* Vermonters deserve improved access to PrEP and PEP coverage, including the Medicaid population.

We also believe that DVHA's concerns can be easily addressed, allowing Vermonters on Medicaid to benefit from this important amendment. As noted in their testimony to your committee on 4/17/26, DVHA already covers versions of PrEP and PEP without prior-authorization and zero cost-sharing. Additionally, most pharmacies in Vermont are already enrolled as Medicaid providers.

The HCA believes that DVHA's concerns surrounding fiscal impact could be addressed with a few small tweaks to the language of the amendment. In this way, DVHA could continue to manage this drug class in an affordable fashion.

We know that pharmacists are among the most accessible health care providers in many communities and often are easier to reach than a primary care provider. Because PEP must be started within 72 hours of a potential exposure, Vermonters cannot afford to delay access to care. Missing this short and critical window would undermine the efficacy of HIV prevention efforts and would also have a long-term detrimental impact on DVHA's Medicaid budget.

This is the kind of targeted, high-impact policy change Vermont should be considering—one that lowers barriers, improves access, advances public health, and moves us closer to the very real goal of ending the HIV epidemic. Vermonters with Medicaid must be included.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Sincerely,

/s/ Emma Zavez

Health Policy Analyst, Office of the Health Care Advocate

/s/ Charles Becker

Staff Attorney, Office of the Health Care Advocate