

CAPITOL OFFICE
Room 4130
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 319-2075
FAX (916) 319-2175

Assembly California Legislature

MARIE WALDRON
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, 75TH DISTRICT

COMMITTEES
Vice Chair: Arts, Entertainment,
Sports, Tourism and Internet Media
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Assembly Ethics
Assembly Rules
Health

DISTRICT OFFICE
350 W. 5th Ave. Suite 110
Escondido, CA 92025
(760) 480-7570
FAX (760) 480-7516



AB 1791: PHYSICIANS: CONTINUING EDUCATION

AUTHORS: WALDRON/GIPSON

COAUTHOR: WIENER

SUMMARY: Reducing the number of new HIV/AIDS infections requires prevention efforts and education. Ample research shows that Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) awareness among primary care providers is inadequate. As a result, these lifesaving treatments are under-prescribed at the expense of patient care, especially for prevention treatment and counseling in high-risk communities. Including medical provider continuing education on PrEP and PEP for prevention of HIV/AIDS, medication maintenance and counseling in primary care settings is critical.

EXISTING LAW: The Medical Practice Act provides for the licensure, regulation and standards of the continuing education of physicians and surgeons by the Medical Board of California.

THE ISSUE: PrEP has been FDA approved since 2012 and reduces HIV/AIDS infection by more than 90% and is beneficial in preventing infection in patients in high risk groups. Despite PrEP success, a 2017 survey of healthcare providers found that 32% of the doctors surveyed stated they were uncomfortable prescribing PrEP because they either lack sufficient knowledge about PrEP (72.5%), lacked experience in prescribing PrEP (56.3%), or they thought it was not covered by insurance (17.5%).

Additionally, studies show that a large number of health care providers have knowledge of PEP, but lacked training in PEP. Because PEP must be administered within 72 hours after exposure to HIV/AIDS, it is crucial for health care providers to have pre-existing knowledge of PEP to prevent potential infection.

To correct erroneous treatment delays and denials for PrEP and PEP, the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) issued a statement clarifying that treatment for beneficiaries enrolled in Managed Care Plans are covered. Additionally, DHCS encouraged providers "to take appropriate actions to ensure that all staff are equally well informed regarding the...procedures for providing and billing for the medications." DHCS recognizes the benefits of these treatments.

THE SOLUTION: This bill would require the Medical Board of California to consider courses in PrEP and PEP medication maintenance and counseling in primary care settings when determining its continuing education requirements.

SUPPORT:

LA LGBT Center, APLA Health, SF AIDS Foundation, Desert AIDS Project

CONTACT:

Robert Wilson, Office of Assemblymember Waldron
(916) 319-2075 or robert.wilson@asm.ca.gov