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Rep. Tina Liebling, Chair
Committee on Health Finance and Policy
473 State Office Building
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear Chair Liebling,

I am writing in support of HF 3854, authored by Rep. Hollins, on behalf of the 3,300 physician assistants providing health care services to vulnerable Minnesotans. Minnesota's physician assistants are on the front lines of health care delivery, serving as the provider of care in over 10,000,000 patient visits last year. Minnesota's physician assistants provide high quality cost-effective primary and specialty care across the State.

This important bill would allow trained pharmacists to initiate HIV Pre- Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and Post- Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) medication for the prevention of HIV infections. The bill corresponds with national efforts by the CDC and state-based campaigns to end new HIV infections. Community pharmacies are accessible neighborhood healthcare destinations that should be leveraged to conduct HIV screening, and when indicated, provide convenient and cost-effective access to this life-saving medication. At least 12 states have already passed similar legislation.

In 2018, there were 8,575 people living with HIV in Minnesota and 288 people newly diagnosed with HIV. At the same time, only 2,830 Minnesotans were reported to take pre-exposure prophylaxis therapy (PrEP). Nearly 25% of those diagnosed with HIV in 2018 were diagnosed too late to benefit from these medications. Pharmacies stand ready as accessible, convenient, welcoming healthcare destinations to provide essential HIV testing and prevention therapy. Studies have also shown that since pharmacies are regularly visited for multiple reasons, and open in evening and on weekends, that some patients consider pharmacies to be less stigmatizing than traditional HIV testing sites.

Physician assistants understand that pharmacists are the medication experts of the health care team. They receive extensive training and have shown their expertise around patient assessments, side effects, point of care testing and drug therapies. Minnesota's physician assistants look forward to partnering with pharmacists on our own vital efforts to bring this life-saving medication to the patients that need it.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill that could make a real difference in eliminating new HIV infections by allowing health care professions to collaborate to greatly increase access.

Sincerely,

MAJ(R) Jenifer K. Detert, PA-C,
President, Minnesota Academy of Physician Assistants (MAPA)