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California Legislature Sends Landmark PrEP & PEP Education Bill to Gov. Brown

*Co-Sponsored by Los Angeles LGBT Center and APLA Health, AB 2640
Ensures HIV-Negative Individuals Receive Information about PrEP and PEP
During HIV Post-Test Counseling*

(Los Angeles; August 24, 2016)—Landmark legislation to boost awareness of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) to prevent HIV infection was sent to California Gov. Jerry Brown today having received strong support in both the Senate and the Assembly. It's the first statewide legislation of its kind.

Co-sponsored by the Los Angeles LGBT Center and APLA Health and introduced by Assemblymember Mike A. Gipson (D-Carson), AB 2640 will ensure high-risk HIV-negative individuals receive information about methods that reduce the risk of contracting HIV, including PrEP and PEP, during HIV post-test counseling.

“We are very pleased that the legislature has taken this important step toward increasing awareness of PrEP and PEP in California,” APLA Health Chief Executive Officer Craig E. Thompson said. “These prevention tools are keys to ending the spread of HIV and this bill will ensure that everyone who takes an HIV test is provided with accurate information about how to protect themselves. We call on Governor Brown to make California a leader in HIV prevention and sign the bill when it reaches his desk.”

PrEP is an HIV prevention strategy in which HIV-negative individuals take a daily medication to reduce their risk of becoming infected. PrEP has been shown to be up to 99% effective at preventing HIV

transmission. PEP involves taking anti-HIV medications as soon as possible after a potential exposure to reduce the risk of becoming HIV-positive. According to a 2015 survey of gay and bisexual men by the California HIV/AIDS Research Program, only 1 in 10 respondents had ever used PrEP and nearly 85% had never talked to their doctor about PrEP.

“Alarming, awareness of PrEP and PEP is particularly low for those most at risk of HIV infection in California: Black and Latino men who are gay or bisexual,” Los Angeles LGBT Center Medical Director Dr. Robert Bolan said. “By signing this common sense legislation, Governor Brown will help people receive information about how to protect themselves and promote more open dialogue about sexual health between medical providers and patients.”

The West Hollywood City Council recently voted to require that the city’s contracted providers of HIV testing provide information about PrEP during pre- and/or post-test counseling. However, there is currently no statewide requirement to provide information about any HIV prevention methods, including PrEP and PEP, during HIV post-test counseling.

“It is estimated that 1 in 2 Black gay men and 1 in 4 Latino gay men will be diagnosed with HIV in their lifetime if infection rates continue to rise. This is unconscionable. Women of color and transgender individuals are also among the groups at greatest risk for HIV,” Assemblymember Gipson said. “We now have effective tools like PrEP and PEP that can help end the HIV epidemic, but that won’t happen unless people know about them. We must do more to make sure that people know about the tools available to protect themselves.”

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About Los Angeles LGBT Center

Since 1969 the Los Angeles LGBT Center has cared for, championed and celebrated LGBT individuals and families in Los Angeles and beyond. Today the Center’s nearly 600 employees provide services for more LGBT people than any other organization in the world, offering programs, services and global advocacy that span four broad categories: Health, Social Services and Housing, Culture and Education, Leadership and Advocacy. We are an unstoppable force in the fight against bigotry and the struggle to build a better world; a world in which LGBT people can be healthy, equal and complete members of society. Learn more at lalgbtcenter.org.

About APLA Health

APLA Health’s mission is to achieve health care equity and promote well-being for the LGBT and other underserved communities and people living with and affected by HIV. We are a nonprofit, federally qualified health center serving more than 14,000 people annually. We provide 20 different services from 15 locations throughout Los Angeles County, including: medical, dental, and behavioral health care; PrEP counseling and management; health education and HIV prevention; and STD screening and treatment. For people living with HIV, we offer housing support; benefits counseling; home health care; and the Vance North Necessities of Life Program food pantries; among several other critically needed services. Additionally, we are leaders in advocating for policy and legislation that positively impacts the LGBT and HIV communities, provide capacity-building assistance to health departments across the country, and conduct community-based research on issues affecting the communities we serve. For more information, please visit us at aplahealth.org.