

Spectrum Health System
Government Affairs | MC065
100 Michigan Street NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616.391.2726 fax 616.391.2092
spectrum-health.org

September 14, 2010

VIA HAND DELIVERY

The Honorable Tom George
Michigan Senate
PO Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

Dear Chairman George:

Earlier this year, the state House passed House Bill 4583, a bill that amends the public health code regarding the process for testing for Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). This legislation, which is supported by Spectrum Health, will require health care professionals to share appropriate information regarding the test, but will no longer require a separate written consent form to be signed by the patient, as is required under current state law.

In our experience, this separate consent form has shown to be a barrier to testing and reinforces outdated stigmas, as opposed to allowing the test to be performed as permitted under the general consent for treatment form that all patients sign prior to receiving medical care. While patients will always maintain the ability to refuse testing, as with any medical procedure, this legislation will enable testing to be ordered when medically appropriate similarly to the way tests are conducted for any other sexually transmitted infection, such as syphilis, gonorrhea, and hepatitis B.

As you can appreciate, early detection is much less costly than treating a patient whose HIV has progressed into AIDS. House Bill 4583 **will (1) remove the barrier to testing, (2) improve the early detection of HIV, and (3) update Michigan laws more consistent with the medical best-practices in other states and closer to the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).** This early detection also addresses a serious public health threat by increasing earlier medical treatment of individuals who are HIV-positive, ultimately reducing the progression to AIDS and preventing the unrecognized transmission of HIV to others.

In order to secure broad support, over the past year and a half we have been pleased to work closely with the Michigan Department of Community Health, the Michigan Health & Hospital Association, and the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan. Thank you for your support and we appreciate you taking up this legislation in the Senate Health Policy Committee Hearing.

Sincerely,



Mark A. Lemoine
Director, System Government Affairs