



February 24, 2017

The Honorable Scott Wiener
State Capitol, Room 4066
Sacramento, CA 95814-4900

RE: SB 239 (Wiener) – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Wiener,

The California In-Home Supportive Services Consumer Alliance (CICA) is pleased to support your SB 239 (Wiener), which would modernize laws that criminalize and stigmatize people living with HIV.

The California IHSS Consumer Alliance (CICA) is a non-profit organization representing recipients and providers of the California In-Home Supportive Service (IHSS) program. CICA is committed to improving and enhancing the lives of all those who use and provide In-Home Supportive Services. CICA is committed to empowering recipients, family, friends, community members and providers by offering education, training and networking opportunities. CICA believes that building collaborations among IHSS Public Authority Advisory Committees, and all stakeholders, will strengthen the recipient voice to elected officials, policy makers, and the public.

During the 1980s and 1990s, fear and ignorance about HIV and its transmission led California to enact discriminatory criminal laws targeting people living with HIV. These laws created unique restrictions on and harsher punishment for people living with HIV compared to people living with other communicable diseases. Since then, effective treatments have been developed that dramatically lengthen and improve the quality of life for people living with HIV. Successfully treated, people living with HIV have a near normal life expectancy and the risk of transmission to others is negligible to nonexistent.

Current HIV-specific criminal laws in California fail to reflect a science-based understanding of HIV prevention, treatment and transmission. Research suggests that criminal laws targeting HIV have done nothing to further public health, as they have not been found to influence people's behaviors or reduce the number of new infections. Instead, these laws have been found to disproportionately impact women and people of color in California. While women living with HIV comprise only 13 percent of people living with HIV, they make up 43 percent of those

criminalized under California’s HIV-specific criminal laws. Furthermore, while about half of people living with HIV in California are Black or Latino, two thirds of people criminalized under HIV specific laws are Black or Latino. Thus, criminal prosecution under these laws serves only to fuel continued stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV and communities disproportionately impacted by HIV.

California criminal law should take the same approach to HIV as it does to other serious communicable diseases. We support promoting public health by reducing HIV stigma and eliminating any remaining barriers to testing and care. For these reasons, we support SB 239 and your effort to bring California law into line with current science.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles Bean". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

CHARLES BEAN
Executive Director

cc: The Honorable Todd Gloria
The Honorable David Chiu
Members and Committee Staff, Senate Committees on Health and Public Safety