



NEWS RELEASE

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Sen. Wright's HIV prevention bill becomes law

Governor Brown signs SB 422 to improve reporting, widen access to critical health services

SACRAMENTO – A measure by State Senator Roderick D. Wright (D-Inglewood) to help prevent the spread of HIV through improved reporting has been signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown.

California law today can be interpreted as absolutely prohibiting a physician from identifying a patient with HIV to the local public health department, effectively cutting off HIV patients and other exposed partners the department would contact from critical services that are available to them.

SB 422 would allow a physician to make such notification with consent of the patient. It also expands the definition of who can be notified to include public health agency staff for partner services. In an era of extreme partisanship, Wright used his experience to garner overwhelming, bi-partisan support for the measure in both houses of the Legislature.

"The passage and signing of SB 422 represents a victory for public health," said Dr. Ronald P. Hattis, President of Beyond AIDS, which supported the bill. Beyond AIDS is a national organization dedicated to improved public health policy to stop HIV transmission.

"Physicians will finally have a legal way of referring patients to their local public health departments for partner services," Hattis said, adding, "Trained public health staff can then interview the patients to determine who may have been exposed, and then notify those persons and refer them for HIV testing, counseling and any necessary treatment."

"The best hope for sustained quality of life for those afflicted with HIV is early diagnosis and proper treatment," said Wright. "This bill will provide many patients that hope, and hopefully save others from being infected altogether."

With improved reporting, partners who have not yet been infected can take precautions to avoid acquiring HIV, while those who already have been infected can avoid passing the virus on and can get early care. The bill will also protect public health staff from liability when they notify sexual partners of, or those who have shared needles with, someone who is HIV positive, as long as the infected individual's identifying information is not disclosed without his or her consent.

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