

SB460/HB283 Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Gender–Affirming Treatment (Trans Health Equity Act)

Bill Sponsor: Delegates Kaiser, Cullison, Acevero, Allen, Amprey, Atterbeary, Bagnall, B. Barnes, Barve, Boyce, Cardin, Charkoudian, Clippinger, Ebersole, Edelson, Embry, Fair, Feldmark, Fennell, Foley, Forbes, Fraser-Hidalgo, Grossman, Guzzone, Hill, D. Jones, Kaufman, Kelly, Kerr, Lehman, R. Lewis, Lopez, Love, McCaskill, Mireku-North, Moon, Palakovich Carr, Pasteur, Qi, Queen, Reznik, Rosenberg, Ruth, Shetty, Simpson, Smith, Solomon, Stein, Stewart, Taveras, Terrasa, Valderrama, Vogel, Watson, Wells, Wilkins, and Ziegler and Senators M. Washington, Augustine, Elfreth, Feldman, Guzzone, Hettleman, King, Kramer, Lam, Smith, Waldstreicher, Zucker, and Ellis

Committee: House Health and Government Operations and Senate Finance

Organization Submitting: Lower Shore Progressive Caucus

Person Submitting: Dr. Nicole Hollywood, LSPC

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB460/HB283 on behalf of the Lower Shore Progressive Caucus. The Caucus is a political and activist organization on the Eastern Shore, unaffiliated with any political party, committed to empowering working people by building a Progressive movement on the Lower Eastern Shore.

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation (2020), evidence shows that transgender people suffer from a greater frequency of chronic health conditions and experience higher rates of health problems related to HIV/AIDS, substance use, mental illness, and sexual and physical violence. In addition, transgender Americans often face obstacles when it comes to their ability to access health insurance and receive adequate care. These disparities further compound for transgender people of color and/or those living with disabilities who are faced with multiple minority stresses and multiple dimensions of systematic discrimination.

Gender-affirming care is both life-affirming and life-saving and encompasses a range of psychological, behavioral, and medical interventions. Research overwhelmingly shows that gender-affirming care greatly improves the mental health and overall well-being of gender-diverse, transgender, and nonbinary children, adolescents, and adults.

SB460/HB283 would require the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to provide gender-affirming treatment in a nondiscriminatory manner; requiring that the gender-affirming treatment be assessed according to nondiscriminatory criteria that are consistent with current clinical standards; prohibiting the issuance of an adverse benefit determination related to gender-affirming treatment unless a certain experienced health care provider has reviewed and confirmed the appropriateness of the determination; etc.

SB460/HB283 will resolve terrible inequities in Maryland's current healthcare system the result of which will enhance the quality of life of thousands of transgender Marylanders.

The Lower Shore Progressive Caucus recognizes that gender-diverse, transgender, and nonbinary individuals who are able to receive gender-affirming care are more likely to thrive and denying them the care is an injustice and as such supports this bill and recommends a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.