

House Bill 0691 Support (FAV)

My name is Donovan van der Gracht, I live in District 13 (9705 Clocktower Lane, Columbia MD, 20146) and I respectfully urge a favorable report on House Bill 691.

I am writing to give my perspective as a transgender man who has fled a state that passed anti-trans laws and settled here in Maryland. I grew up in Howard County, Maryland, but moved to North Carolina to attend college. When I was 19 years old, North Carolina passed HB2, which stripped LGBT people of nondiscrimination rights and prevented transgender people from using the correct bathroom. I experienced public harassment anywhere I went. It was humiliating and I constantly feared for my safety. I knew that despite the love I had grown for North Carolina, I couldn't stay there. I was fortunate enough to move back to my home state of Maryland, but I promised myself that I would continue to advocate for my community who still live in states passing anti-trans laws.

An alarming number of states are passing legislation that bans and criminalizes gender affirming care. Just a few examples from 2023 are North Carolina HB808, Texas SB14, and Tennessee HB1. There were dozens of laws enacted like these last year^{[1][2]}, and many more proposed this year^[3]. While many of those laws were focused on banning gender affirming care for minors, we see increasing conversations and proposals for banning gender affirming care for adults as well^{[4][5]}.

Trans healthcare often requires patients to travel across state lines to access the providers they need. For gender confirming surgery, it is not uncommon that a patient sees an out of state surgeon due to insurance and cost constraints and to ensure their surgeon has the correct training and experience. When I consider HB 691, I think about people who travel from all over the country here to Maryland to receive quality care from our teams of phenomenal doctors and surgeons.

I also think about the folks who live in neighboring states that have just passed laws banning the care they need, and I worry about college students who receive gender affirming care here in Maryland, but travel out of state to finish their degrees.

I have family and friends who live in North Carolina, Texas, and Tennessee. I want to offer them a safe place to stay if they need medical care and I need to know their private medical data will be protected if they do so.

Maryland is only safe if we commit to protecting the people who receive their care here and the people who administer that care. I am a proud Marylander, and I would be even more proud if we committed to enshrining my community's rights to our medical privacy in Maryland law. **I respectfully urge a favorable report for HB 691.** Thank you for your consideration.

[1] <https://translegislation.com/bills/2023/passed>

[2] <https://www.reuters.com/graphics/USA-HEALTHCARE/TRANS-BILLS/zgvorreyapd/>

[3] <https://translegislation.com/>

[4] <https://www.axios.com/2023/03/29/transgender-health-care-adult-ban-bills>

[5] <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2024/02/15/trans-adults-bathroom-medical-identity/>