



## Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

### Testimony in Support of HB 691 - Legally Protected Health Care - Gender-Affirming Treatment

TO: Joseline Peña-Melnyk, Chair, and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee.  
FROM: Kari Alperovitz-Bichell, MD, MPH  
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland Health Care  
DATE: February 21, 2024

I am Kari Alperovitz-Bichell, MD representing myself, both as a physician, and as a person of faith speaking on behalf of the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland.

We urge you to support **HB 691 - Legally Protected Health Care - Gender-Affirming Treatment** which would protect medical providers, patients, and their support networks from out-of-state investigations and prosecutions related to gender affirming care. Last year the legislature provided these protections to providers of reproductive health care (including abortion) – and we strongly applaud that legislation. However, gender affirming treatment was left out of last year’s legislation. This needs to be addressed now.

As a primary care physician, I have provided both gender affirming treatment and reproductive health care in my practice. On one hand, I am relieved that we now have the protections afforded in last year’s legislation. However, I am quite alarmed that doctors in Seattle, WA, are already being targeted by out-of-state investigators.<sup>1</sup> Doctors ought to be able to focus on providing excellent treatment for every patient. Not worry about whether a patient might have “snuck in” from some other state or that their treatment will put them both at risk for prosecution or financial ruin.

I have seen first hand how gender affirming care can be lifesaving. Untreated patients can be extremely depressed and suffer a high suicide rate. Treatment can alleviate that suffering to an immense degree. Without the protection of shielding laws, I am terrified that the perceived threats from other states could have a chilling effect on provision of needed gender affirming health care services to patients.

But, more fundamentally for me and my fellow Unitarian Universalists, I am called by the first principle of my faith to affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every human being. Our faith recognizes a universal human need for safe and dignified health care, a need that does not stop at state lines.

Therefore, we at UULM-MD urge you to vote yes on HB 691, to include gender affirming care as “legally protected healthcare” in Maryland.

*Kari Alperovitz-Bichell, MD, MPH*

**UULM-MD c/o UU Church of Annapolis 333 Dubois Road Annapolis, MD 21401 410-266-8044,**

[www.uulmmd.org](http://www.uulmmd.org) [info@uulmmd.org](mailto:info@uulmmd.org) [www.facebook.com/uulmmd](https://www.facebook.com/uulmmd) [www.Twitter.com/uulmmd](https://www.twitter.com/uulmmd)

1. [https://www.texastribune.org/2023/12/21/texas-attorney-general-trans-seattle-childrens/?utm\\_campaign=trib-social-buttons&utm\\_source=copy&utm\\_medium=social](https://www.texastribune.org/2023/12/21/texas-attorney-general-trans-seattle-childrens/?utm_campaign=trib-social-buttons&utm_source=copy&utm_medium=social)

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2023/12/23/texas-seeks-residents-gender-care-records-from-seattle-childrens/72021017007/>