



Support: HB691 Legally Protected Health Care - Gender-Affirming Treatment

2/17/24

Maryland House of Representatives
Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Honorable Chair, Vice-Chair and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the pediatric nurse practitioners (PNPs) and fellow pediatric-focused advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNP) Chesapeake Chapter, I am writing to express our **support of HB691 Legally Protected Health Care - Gender-Affirming Treatment.**

In 2023, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Reproductive Health Protection Act (SB859/HB808), which protects abortion providers, patients, and support networks from out-of-state litigation. Unfortunately, the Reproductive Health Protection Act did not include gender-affirming care in the definition of "legally protected healthcare". This omission puts those seeking, providing, or assisting with gender-affirming care at risk, and leaves huge holes in the shield for reproductive care, as many providers do both.

SB119/HB691 is a simple technical fix that adds gender-affirming healthcare to the definition of "legally protected healthcare" in Maryland. In 2023, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Reproductive Health Protection Act (SB859/HB808), which protects abortion providers, patients, and support networks from out-of-state litigation.

Gender-affirming care is recognized as medically necessary healthcare by every major medical association, including the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics. Eleven states and the District of Columbia have shielding laws that include gender-affirming care, and three more states have introduced bills to do so this year. Last year, Governor Moore signed an Executive Order that shields gender-affirming care from out-of-state litigation. However, without the legislature defining this care as legally protected healthcare, it remains vulnerable.

Twenty-two states have implanted bans on this life-saving care within the past few years. One such state has already filed a lawsuit to obtain information on a patient who sought out-of-state care. The penalties for providing gender-affirming care can include losing medical licenses, as well as civil and criminal lawsuits aimed at patients and providers. Our neighbors in Ohio, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania are among the states with proposed bans or bans in place. Maryland must continue to be a safe haven for transgender people and pass this technical fix to ensure that this life-saving care remains protected in our state.



For these reasons the Maryland Chesapeake Chapter of NAPNAP extends their **support of HB691 Legally Protected Health Care - Gender-Affirming Treatment.**

The pediatric advanced practice nurses of your state are grateful to you for your attention to these crucial issues. The members of Chesapeake Chapter of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners memberships includes over 200 primary and acute care pediatric nurse practitioners who are committed to improving the health and advocating for Maryland's pediatric patients. If we can be of any further assistance, or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Lindsay J. Ward, the Chesapeake Chapter President at 410-507-3642 or MDChesNAPNAPLeg@outlook.com.

Sincerely,

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