



**COMMISSION FOR WOMEN  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CLUSTER**

February 21, 2024

Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk

Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee

House Office Building, 3 East Street

Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB 691 Legally Protected Health Care – Gender-Affirming Treatment

Position: **SUPPORT**

Dear Chairperson Pena-Melnyk, and members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee,

On behalf of the Montgomery County Commission for Women, I am writing to ask for your support of HB 691 — Legally Protected Health Care – Gender-Affirming Treatment. The proposed legislation would codify Governor Wes Moore’s executive order that offers legal protections to individuals who seek, assist, provide, or obtain gender affirming care. Additionally, the bill would offer legal protection that an executive order cannot provide, such as shielding against potential lawsuits from other states. This bill comes at a critical time as other states seek to limit, and in some cases criminalize, gender-affirming care.

Montgomery County Commission for Women advocates for legislation that promotes the equal and full participation of women and girls in every aspect of community living and access to education, healthcare, and work advancement with political and economic power. Gender affirming care is necessary for equal and full participation in all facets of society.

Ensuring safe access to gender affirming care within Maryland is essential to the health and wellbeing of citizens of this state. Gender affirming treatment is evidence-based medicine, and associated with better health outcomes for transgender individuals (e.g., decreased odds of depression, decreased odds of suicidal ideation, increased positive affect, increased life satisfaction). Additionally, medical providers are leaving states that criminalize aspects of reproductive health care. By shoring up protections for gender affirming care providers, Maryland ensures we are not losing the medical knowledge and expertise we need to keep our communities safe and healthy. Therefore, I urge a favorable report on HB 691.

Sincerely,

Commissioner Elizabeth Richards

Member, Policy & Legislative Committee

Montgomery County Commission for Women