



**Maryland Commission
on LGBTQIA+ Affairs**

**TESTIMONY OF JEREMY BROWNING
DIRECTOR, MARYLAND COMMISSION ON LGBTQIA+ AFFAIRS
FAVORABLE STATEMENT ON HB0691
LEGALLY PROTECTED HEALTH CARE - GENDER-AFFIRMING TREATMENT**

February 21, 2024

Health and Government Operations Committee

The Hon. Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair
The Hon. Bonnie Cullison, Vice Chair

Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice-Chair Cullison, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee, my name is Jeremy Browning(he/him), and I am the Director of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs. The Commission was created by the 2021 Maryland General Assembly, and later altered in 2023, to assess challenges facing our LGBTQIA+ communities, establish best practices and recommendations for LGBTQIA+ inclusion, and provide testimony to legislative and administrative bodies.

Ensuring passage of House Bill 691 is a top priority for the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs. This bill, Legally Protected Health Care - Gender-Affirming Treatment, will codify the executive order signed by Governor Wes Moore in June 2023.

House Bill 691 protects gender-affirming health care in Maryland and will build on the State's efforts to safeguard the rights of LGBTQIA+ individuals. The bill protects those seeking, receiving, or providing gender-affirming care in Maryland from attempts at legal punishment by other states.

Access to gender-affirming health care is not only a matter of medical necessity, but also a fundamental aspect of affirming one's gender identity and improving overall health and well-being. The following highlights from 2022 U.S. Trans Survey Early Insights Report demonstrate the importance of access to gender-affirming care:

- Nearly all respondents (98%) who were currently receiving hormone treatment reported that receiving hormones for their gender identity/transition made them either “a lot more satisfied” (84%) or “a little more satisfied” (14%) with their life.
- Nearly all respondents (97%) who had at least one form of surgery for their gender identity/ transition reported that they were either “a lot more satisfied” (88%) or “a little more satisfied” (9%) with their life.

Additionally, House Bill 691 provides much-needed clarity and protection for healthcare practitioners who provide gender-affirming care by prohibiting disciplinary actions for providing legally protected health care. The bill ensures healthcare professionals can fulfill their ethical obligations to provide competent and affirming care without fear of reprisal or discrimination.

Major medical organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association and the American Psychiatric Association, support the provision of age-appropriate, gender-affirming care for transgender and nonbinary people. These doctors represent over 1.3 million doctors in the United States. Further, the overwhelming preponderance of research published in leading medical journals shows gender-affirming healthcare practices have been shown to result in lower rates of mental health issues, healthier self-esteem, and improved overall quality of life.

Passage of House Bill 691 simply codifies the executive order signed by Governor Moore and is a critical step to enshrine the rights and dignity of transgender, nonbinary, and gender-diverse Marylanders. For those reasons, the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs strongly urges a favorable report on House Bill 691.

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