



House Bill 691
Legally Protected Health Care - Gender-Affirming Treatment
February 21, 2024
Support

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

Advance Maryland is submitting this testimony in strong support of HB691, which would add gender-affirming care to the definition of 'legally protected healthcare' in Maryland.

At Advance Maryland, we work towards a Maryland with thriving, healthy and inclusive communities where all Marylanders have access to opportunity, including safe and affordable housing; economic prosperity; quality healthcare; reliable transportation; a restorative justice system; and a livable future.

Last year, we supported the passage of the Reproductive Health Protection Act, which shielded abortion care from out-of-state litigation. Unfortunately, the exclusion of gender-affirming care from the bill left gaping holes in the shield for abortion care and left gender-affirming care entirely unprotected.

By passing HB691, we will protect gender-affirming care providers, patients, and support networks, strengthen the shield for abortion care as well.

Other states are trying to criminalize the care that we provide in Maryland. Twenty-three states have bans on gender-affirming care in place or have proposed bans this year. One such state has already attempted to get information on a patient who sought gender-affirming care in Washington.

The danger to our providers, patients, and support networks is very real. Although Governor Moore did sign an executive order protecting gender-affirming care last year, only HB691 can truly ensure that this life-saving care remains accessible here in Maryland. We must join the eleven other states (and the District of Columbia) who have affirmed their treatment to accessible care with strong shielding laws.

We cannot allow other states to dictate the type of medical care we provide here in Maryland.

For all these reasons, we strongly urge the committee to give HB691 a favorable report.

Sincerely,
Alice Wilkerson
Executive Director, Advance Maryland