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

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

The Reproductive Health Access Project (RHAP) trains, supports, and mobilizes primary care clinicians to ensure equitable access to sexual and reproductive health care, including abortion. By centering communities most impacted by barriers to care, RHAP fills critical gaps in clinical education and care delivery. The Reproductive Health Access Network, a program of RHAP, pulls together over 7,800 primary care clinicians from all 50 states, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, and Canada to come together virtually and in-person to engage in advocacy, clinical training, and peer support. RHAP's Mid-Atlantic Cluster (Maryland and D.C.) has over 150 primary care clinicians who work at the state and local levels to provide, protect, and expand access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care, including gender-affirming care. HB691 will allow our clinicians to provide live-saving gender-affirming care to patients across the state without the threat of extradition, investigation, or discipline.

RHAP is submitting this testimony in support of HB691, Legally Protected Healthcare - Gender-Affirming Treatment, which would add gender-affirming care to the definition of legally protected healthcare in Maryland.

Our organization has been involved in legislative actions in Maryland, and we recently co-sponsored the reproductive rights package that was signed in 2023. Our clinicians understand the importance of gender-affirming care as an essential component of the full range of sexual and reproductive health care services, which is why this care must be included in the definition of “legally protected healthcare” in Maryland.

The rise in attacks on transgender individuals and bans on gender-affirming care across states further demonstrates the urgency



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of this issue. Gender-affirming care is widely recognized as medically necessary by leading medical institutions including the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics. This is life-saving care. Maryland must continue to be a safe haven for transgender people and protect the clinicians who provide and patients who seek gender-affirming care.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB691.**

Sincerely,

Amelia Cecchetto  
Manager of Communications  
Reproductive Health Access Project