



## LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

Bill: **SB119/HB691 Gender Affirming Care**

Organization: PFLAG Salisbury Inc., PO Box 5107, Salisbury Maryland 21802

Submitted by: Nicole Hollywood, Board Member

Position: **FAVORABLE**

### **SALISBURY PFLAG SUPPORTS GENDER AFFIRMING CARE**

LGBTQIA+ people experience a number of health disparities. They are at higher risk of certain conditions, have significantly less access to health care, and have worse health outcomes. These disparities come from a combination of homophobia and transphobia, a lack of access to affirming healthcare, misinformation, and inequities in our health care system.

Gender-affirming care, as defined by the World Health Organization, encompasses a range of social, psychological, behavioral, and medical interventions “designed to support and affirm an individual’s gender identity” when it conflicts with the gender they were assigned at birth. The interventions help transgender and gender non-conforming individuals align various aspects of their lives — emotional, interpersonal, and biological — with their gender identity. Gender-affirming care consists of an array of services that may include medical, surgical, mental health, and non-medical services for transgender and nonbinary people.

Every single major medical organization, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association and the American Psychiatric Association, affirms the benefits of gender-affirming care as overwhelmingly, gender-affirming healthcare practices have been shown in the research to result in lower rates of mental health issues, healthier self-esteem, and improve individual's overall quality of life. It is also important to note that to date, no reputable studies have reported findings that suggest GAC increases negative mental or physical health outcomes.

Gender-affirming care has always existed and isn’t a new phenomenon.” SB119/HB691 would amend the definition of "legally protected health care" to include certain gender-affirming treatment. These protections include:

- Shielding consumers, providers, and support individuals from extradition for gender-affirming care provided in Maryland
- Prohibiting Maryland agencies and law enforcement from assisting with out-of-state investigations of gender-affirming care legally protected in Maryland
- Prohibiting occupational boards from disciplining a licensed or certified individual over out-of-state complaints for gender-affirming care

SB119/HB691 will help address inequities in Maryland's current healthcare system that will greatly enhance the quality of life of thousands of transgender Marylanders. Because of this, we recommend a FAVORABLE report in committee.