



Senate Bill 119 / House Bill 691
Legally Protected Health Care – Gender–Affirming Treatment
Position: **FAV**

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Claudia Martinez. I'm a Client Services Lead and Trans Care Navigator at a healthcare clinic, and a member of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. We are the largest healthcare workers union in the country, with over 10,000 members in Maryland and Washington DC. Our union supports SB119 / HB691, and we urge the Committee to issue a **favorable** report. This legislation will protect patients, providers, and support networks of Gender Affirming Healthcare (GAC) in Maryland.

Too many trans people end up dead when we are not living our authentic lives as the gender we truly are. Transgender people are disproportionately targeted with violence and have very high rates of depression and suicide. GAC literally saves lives, which means, we need to protect GAC providers by passing SB119/HB691. Trans people need to continue to get this care, and providers of GAC should not be punished for saving our lives.

If we don't protect healthcare workers, they won't be able to provide care, and that impacts *everyone*. We have a short staffing crisis in healthcare. At clinics like mine, we provide all types of healthcare – not exclusively GAC. So, if GAC providers are being targeted with criminal penalties and we lose those healthcare providers, it creates a domino effect reducing access to other types of care like HIV treatment, preventative care, and more.

I am protected for the work I do because I work in DC, which includes GAC in its shielding law. At my clinic there has been a wave of transgender refugees from Florida coming to our region for GAC. I've heard from trans people and GAC providers that the same trend is happening in Maryland. My peers in Maryland deserve these same protections that DC workers have.

Please vote YES on SB119/HB691. Thank you.

In Unity,

Claudia Martinez
dmvmartinez@gmail.com