

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,

My name is Christie Pitney and I am a nurse practitioner and nurse-midwife here in Maryland. I am a resident of Legislative District 2A. I am 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.

As a nurse-midwife deeply committed to the health and well-being of all individuals, I am writing to express my strong support for Maryland HB691, which seeks to further protect gender-affirming care patients and providers. This crucial legislation represents a significant step forward in ensuring that individuals are able to safely receive the care they need to live authentically and thrive in their gender identity. SB859/HB808 passed last year to support and protect abortion and other reproductive healthcare. Gender-affirming care should have been included then and must be added now. Additionally Governor Moore signed an executive order last year protecting gender-affirming care, but without legislation to reinforce the order, gender-affirming care remains vulnerable.

Gender-affirming care is essential for the physical, mental, and emotional health of transgender and gender-diverse individuals. As healthcare providers, it is our duty to offer compassionate and inclusive care that respects the dignity and autonomy of every patient. This healthcare must be included in the definition of legally protected health care under Maryland law.

Research consistently demonstrates that access to gender-affirming care leads to improved mental health outcomes, reduced rates of depression and anxiety, decreased suicidality, and enhanced overall well-being among transgender individuals. By affirming their gender identity and providing appropriate medical interventions, transgender individuals are empowered to live authentic and fulfilling lives, free from discrimination and stigma.

As our country becomes even more deeply divided, it is critical that we reinforce protections for patients and providers of the full range of healthcare that is being attacked, including gender-affirming care. Patients are traveling from other states into Maryland to receive these services and it is our duty to protect them while they are within our state borders.

As a nurse-midwife, I have had the privilege of caring for transgender and gender-diverse individuals throughout their healthcare journeys. I have witnessed firsthand the profound positive impact that gender-affirming care can have on their lives. I have also

seen the trauma and pain brought upon my patients by a political climate that seeks to eliminate access to healthcare that is critical for them to be able to live authentically.

In conclusion, I urge you to support Maryland HB691 and protect transgender and gender-diverse individuals to access gender-affirming care. By doing so, we affirm our commitment to equity, justice, and compassion in healthcare for all Marylanders.

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

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Christie Pitney, MS, WHNP-BC, CNM

Nurse Practitioner & Nurse-Midwife