

Testimony in Support of SB 682
Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Gender-Affirming Treatment
Trans Health Equity Act of 2022
Senate Finance Committee
February 22, 2022

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Towson District

Chair Kelley and Members of the Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to submit my written testimony in support of Senate Bill 682. This bill matters because it is extremely vital to so many transgender people on Medicaid within Maryland who desperately need these necessary services, myself included. As someone who has been denied a gender affirming surgery because it was deemed “medically unnecessary,” I want to spread word of how great an impact allowing more access to care for transgender folks on an individual basis would be. Like many Marylanders, I presently rely on Medicaid as my primary form of healthcare. Especially during the pandemic, it has been crucial in helping me maintain the services I use to progress in my medical transition. Before I was able to access this care, I suffered chronic depression, which actually began in childhood. I’ve always had horrible body dysmorphia, and much of that ties into being transgender- my body doesn’t look the way it does in my head in reality, which I’m sure you can understand has caused me a great deal of distress. Even with therapy services and support from my friends, I kept falling back into the same patterns and behaviors. I was only really able to see progress in my mental health after I began the process of transitioning, both socially and medically. Having top surgery this past November has allowed me to feel some relief from my constant dysphoria, but I’m still not able to really feel like this is the body I should’ve always had- there’s still a disconnect. I’d also like to have body masculinization surgery, a surgery that would work to masculinize parts of my body that give me dysphoria, such as my hips, thighs, etc. This is a service I was denied because it was deemed “medically unnecessary.” What I found to be most confusing about my denial is the reasoning behind it- my top surgery (medically termed “double incision mastectomy”) was approved because it was a procedure to assist in aligning my appearance with my gender, however body masculinization would also be doing more of the same. I understand that Medicaid denies many services on this same basis but that denial is primarily based on blanket rules which can’t be applied to every transgender person seeking care. This is another reason why I think SB 682 matters, blanket rules don’t allow any space for individual needs and

therefore can't possibly represent the standard of care given. What may not be medically necessary for some may in fact be life-saving for others and I believe it is important to remember that. Please consider what I've written here, and I strongly urge you to offer your support alongside myself and many others vouching for this bill. This could bring so many people who have suffered for so long under the crushing weight of dysphoria to stringent policies and continuous stonewalls to care some well-deserved joy and relief. For myself, I may even be able to have my body masculinization procedure covered and finally feel aligned with my body. The passing of this bill would at least give me hope that this might happen for me in the near future. Though I'm just one person with one testimony, I promise you there are so many more folks like myself in Maryland who are desperately fighting for some relief too. I've seen too many circumstances where barriers become so great that they're just ready to give up. I'm going to keep pushing for change not only for myself, but for them too, because some of us are so weak and tired of fighting daily for our right to care that we don't have much more energy to spend on anything. I implore you to join our fight for equality because even if it doesn't feel like it, people's lives are at stake. This is one step we can take to improve the quality of life of trans folks on Maryland Medicaid, and we should take it.

Thank you again for taking a moment to hear my story,

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