

SUPPORT SB 682/ HB 746

Senate Finance Committee/ House Health and Government Operations Committee

February 22, 2022

Testimony of Claire Repsholdt, St. Mark's Lutheran Church

I am a Vicar working at a church in inner city Baltimore that has historically served the LGBTQ+ community. It is known for being a safe haven during the AIDS crisis in the 80s/90s. I serve many different people today who experience a wide range of expressions of gender and sexuality. Every day, I encounter the psychosocial and spiritual traumas associated with their identities that have kept them marginalized. Our openness to the LGBTQ+ community draws people to our church who do not feel comfortable in other spiritual communities. For instance, a woman who has been a long-time beloved member in another congregation, who was ousted when she began publically expressing her need to make a male-female transition later in life and live life as her true self, a woman. They excluded her from the community and reduced her ability to participate fully. She came to us so that she could have a new chance at fitting in, mind, body, and spirit. Her story is only one of many such stories in which trans and other gender questioning people are unable to fully participate in their communities and must start over. Much of this is due to not receiving appropriate healthcare that could help them align their physical and internal worlds. Because of their marginalized status, many of them must rely on the state for medical care, as they do not have coverage through employers. I know the benefits of Medicaid when it works well because my salary is such that I qualify for Medicaid and use it as my primary coverage. It has saved my life at an early stage of my career when I cannot afford better care. I would wish this for all persons who are on any spectrum of gender and sexuality experience. A bill that would allow Medicaid to affirm trans identity and other sexual expressions would be one large step toward acknowledging the fullness of psychospiritual experience in our communities, and would allow our spiritual wellness to do the work that it can do after appropriate mental and physical health care is done. This would bring me so much joy, as I could see my community have room to deal with their needs appropriately, and it would enable me to offer spiritual care that is not impeded with untreated mental and physical health needs.