



SB 682 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Gender Affirming Treatment (Trans Health Equity Act of 2022)

Committee: Senate Finance

Date: February 22, 2022

POSITION: Support

The Maryland Coalition of Families: Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) helps families who care for a loved one with behavioral health needs. Using personal experience, our staff provide one-to-one peer support and navigation services to family members with a child, youth or adult with a mental health, substance use or gambling issue.

MCF enthusiastically supports SB 682.

Data shows that transgender people experience rates of mental illness and substance misuse at rates much higher than the general population. This is especially true of transgender children and adolescents. A 2020 survey, done by the Trevor Project, showed that 52% of all transgender and nonbinary young people in the U.S. seriously contemplated killing themselves in 2020. Another study of 2020 found that 56% of transgender youth reported a previous suicide attempt and 86% reported suicidality.

Gender affirming treatment can have a profound impact on the behavioral health of transgender individuals. A study published in 2020 in the American Journal of Psychiatry found that among transgender individuals, undergoing gender-affirming surgery was significantly associated with a decrease in mental health treatment over time.

In this matter, I have the personal experience of my own family to draw on.

Our son (born a girl) experienced gender-questioning behavior from the age of 2. At the age of 13, he developed significant mental health problems, including severe self-injurious behavior and multiple suicide attempts, which was at the same time that he decided for himself that he was not of the gender assigned to him at birth. Because of his significant mental health issues, we (mistakenly) did not permit him to undertake any gender reassignment measures as an adolescent.

His mental health continued to decline, and he developed serious substance use issues. At a significant cost to the state, he:

- Spent 9 months in a Maryland Residential Treatment Center (RTC) (paid for by Medicaid)
- Experienced multiple inpatient hospitalizations (paid for by Medicaid)
- Lived for one year in a Residential Rehabilitation Program (RRP) (paid for by Medicaid)

At the age of 19, when he began his gender affirming treatment, his mental health challenges dramatically improved. He stopped self-injuring, there were no more suicide attempts, and furthermore he:

- Got sober
- Moved into his own apartment
- Finished college
- Got off of SSI
- Got off of SSDI
- Is now employed as a software engineer with a well-paying job.

He has joined the ranks of Maryland taxpayers. The cost savings to the state are inestimable.

Our son's gender-reassignment surgery was truly transformative. All transgender individuals should have the opportunity to live a happy and productive life. SB 682 would ensure this.

We urge a favorable report.

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