

My name is Danny Mendoza and as a Transgender Marylander and healthcare worker I stand in strong support of SB 682, the Trans Health Equity Act of 2022, which would require the Maryland Medical Assistance Program (Medicaid) to cover medically necessary gender-affirming treatment.

Maryland is home to over 22,000 Transgender siblings of mine. Nationally and locally, Transgender people experience higher rates of poverty and housing instability compared to cisgender people. Similarly, Black, Latin-American and other non-White LGBTQ+ people experience higher rates of poverty compared to their White, cisgender, straight counterparts. My family of Transgender Marylanders are navigating an outdated and life-threatening healthcare system where necessary gender affirming care that would be covered under a private insurance plan is excluded for Medicaid beneficiaries. As a healthcare worker and advocate for my local Trans community I have seen the daily ramifications of this outdated insurance coverage. For example, this past year I had a gender-affirming top surgery (double mastectomy) covered by my private employer insurance, however my girlfriend who is covered by Maryland Medicaid had to fight for months back and forth trying to get her bottom surgery approved and even then, was worried she would be left with medical debt.

I urge the committee to consider the incredibly high barriers to adequate health care Transgender Marylanders face on top of the daily turmoil being Trans in public has on our community. My journey to gender-affirming surgery took decades of feeling out of place and unwanted in a cisgender society, overcoming suicidal thoughts, finding my truth, surmounting hate crimes and the everyday threat of violence Transgender people face. Imagine living with all that only to be told the medical care you need to feel safe and affirmed is not covered by your insurance.

SB 682 aims to correct this glaring disparity by requiring Medicaid to expand the gender-affirming care that it covers, allowing Maryland to join more than 10 other states that provide more comprehensive care. If passed, SB 682 would increase health equity and improve health outcomes, including mental and physical health, for transgender Marylanders. Please help in saving the precious lives of people who have overcome so much to simply survive, I urge the committee to issue a FAVORABLE report for SB 682.

Sincerely,

Danny Mendoza

They/Them Pronouns

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