

SUPPORT SB 682

Senate Finance Committee

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Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

As an OB/GYN physician who cares for transgender patients in Baltimore County, I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 682.

The Gender-Affirming Treatment/Trans Health Equity Act of 2022 is vital to improve the health and safety of the small group of transgendered Marylanders who are enrolled in Medicaid. Transgender individuals experience disparities in healthcare access at an alarming rate, with 1 in 3 respondents to the US Transgender Survey reporting a negative experience in a healthcare setting and more than half reporting financial barriers to necessary, medically indicated and evidence-based care.

Transgender patients already face a lack of awareness and sensitivity from many healthcare professionals. Without the coverage this bill will provide, they are not able to access standard of care services that result in gender affirmation and decreased discrimination. The systemic discrimination often leads to underuse of healthcare and poor health outcomes which are costly to the system.

This bill will improve my ability to connect patients with medically necessary care based on up-to-date standards in line with other state and private insurance providers. As a Gynecologic Surgeon, I have witnessed firsthand how gender-affirming care drastically improves patients' mental health and well-being, reduces long-term physical and mental health complications of untreated or undertreated gender dysphoria, and improves appropriate use of preventive healthcare.

Senate Bill 682 will align our state with the many other states and private insurers who are already providing this coverage as recommended by the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the American Psychiatric Association and countless other professional healthcare organizations. This bill will align available coverage with the widely accepted and evidence-based standards of care for transgendered patients who also experience gender dysphoria. These often-simple services, such as speech language therapy, are often the key to decreasing

the discrimination these patients experience in other spheres of their lives, such as housing or employment discrimination. By providing this critical access, that brings Maryland in line with current standards of care, we will improve the overall health and well-being of this small group of Marylanders.

I am in support of SB 682 to make medically necessary and life-saving care accessible for low-income Marylanders in Medicaid, just as it is under many private insurance plans.

Thank you for your attention,

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