

Testimony in Support of HB 0746

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

Bessie Liu
Maryland Legislative District 46

To Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, and the House Health & Government Operations Committee:

My name is Bessie Liu, and I'm a resident of Baltimore City and a medical student at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. I am also a member of the LGBTQ+ community in Baltimore, and I am writing in strong support of House Bill 0746.

It has almost always been the case that members of the LGBTQ+ community have had to advocate for themselves – this is especially the case for transgender individuals, who, in the face of growing transphobia and anti-trans legislation across the nation, are continually subjected to new barriers to their well-being, whether concerning the process of medically transitioning or simply being able to live authentically and without fear from day to day.

The medical community has long been in agreement that gender-affirming care is life-saving. Providing expanded Medicaid coverage of gender-affirming care not only gives transgender individuals the support and resources, and most importantly, the choice to transition on their own terms, as they see fit, but also definitively shows them that we care about their health and well-being, that their lives are a priority to us, that their stories matter.

This issue also stays close to me because one of my good friends has just begun his transition, and is currently facing multiple barriers to accessing the care that he needs. It weighs heavily on me that such an important time in his life, a time that should be filled with happiness and fulfillment, is shadowed by such barriers. Although my friend does not reside in Maryland, and will unfortunately not get to experience the impacts of this bill should it be passed, I am certain that many within the transgender community here in Maryland face similar barriers to accessing gender-affirming care – it is our duty to ensure that they are able to get this care, and with this bill, we have the chance to do just that.

In all my time here in Baltimore, I've been lucky to have the chance to speak to and work with a great number of individuals from local communities who continue to amaze me with their resilience in the face of seemingly endless adversity. I've also been fortunate to have gotten to know my fellow LGBTQ+ students and community members, who have taught me so much about the disparities faced by LGBTQ+ individuals and ways in which we can work towards improving these gaps in care. To achieve health equity, we must continue to listen to our community members, and to provide them with the resources they need to live their lives to the fullest.

I urge you to support HB 0746 to continue to improve health equity and access to care for vulnerable patients in Maryland. Thank you so much for your time and attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Bessie Liu

2010 E. Lombard St.
Baltimore MD 21231