

FAVORABLE - SB0682 Trans Health Equity Act

Health and Government Operations Committee

Hearing date: March 2nd, 2022

Testimony of Edgar J. Fields

My transition is a story of transformation. Of the tremendous possibilities for accomplishment that open up to trans people when we have the tools to manifest who we truly are. And my story is common. I was living in a warehouse with ten roommates when I realized that I needed to transition. And I was getting evicted from an even worse living situation when I was preparing for my top surgery - a procedure that would masculinize my chest. The nurses told me I cried when I woke up from the anesthesia. They said I told them that seeing my chest for the first time, the way it is supposed to look, was the first time I had relaxed in years. Within the six months that followed, I got an apartment, my first-ever job on a career track, and was accepted into two master's programs. Having access to the healthcare I needed was what gave me permission to start my life.

Like I said, my story is a common trans experience. I have a friend who landed a job with a six-figure salary shortly after he had the same surgery I did. Another friend who followed a lifelong dream of owning a business after his hysterectomy. Another who got engaged and bought a house after her sex reassignment surgery.

For many trans people, what happens when they get access to the gender affirming healthcare they need is that life becomes possible. Every trans Marylander who cannot access the healthcare they need because of denials from Medicaid is a person waiting in the wings to live beyond surviving day to day and graduate to their best self. A community of people as resilient and ambitious as trans people, when left to do what they need in order to realize full potential, is capable of dramatically changing our society for the better. The Trans Health Equity Act is what will get us there. Let us find out together what a better world looks like.