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SB 682

Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Gender-Affirming Treatment (Trans Health Equity Act of 2022) Hearing of the House Health & Government Operations Committee

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1:30 PM

SUPPORT

The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a not-for-profit civil rights and anti-poverty legal services organization which seeks to advance social justice, economic and racial equity, and fundamental human rights in Maryland. Our Health Rights Project supports policies and practices that promote the overall health of Marylanders struggling to make ends meet, with the explicit goal of eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in health outcomes. The **PJC stands in strong support of SB 682**, the Trans Health Equity Act of 2022, which would require the Maryland Medical Assistance (Medicaid) Program to cover medically necessary gender-affirming treatment.

Maryland is home to over 22,000 individuals who identify as transgender. Nationally, the transgender community experiences higher rates of poverty compared to cisgender people.¹ Similarly, Black, Asian and other non-white LGBT people experience higher rates of poverty compared to their cisgender, straight same-race counterparts.² Transgender Marylanders are navigating a tiered healthcare system where certain gender affirming care that would be covered in private insurance is not covered for Medicaid beneficiaries. Further, the existing list of gender-affirming care that is currently covered by Medicaid is outdated and does not cover comprehensive medically necessary and life-saving care. The lack of access to gender-affirming care impacts low-income transgender Marylanders by leaving them vulnerable not only to discrimination in various areas of life, but also to physical and mental health complications.

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. For these reasons, the Public Justice Center urges the committee to issue a

¹ Badgett, M.V. Lee, et al. UCLA School of Law Williams Institute, *LGBT Poverty in the United States* (2019), <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/National-LGBT-Poverty-Oct-2019.pdf>.

² *Id.*

FAVORABLE report for **SB 682**. If you have any questions about this testimony, please contact Ashley Black at 410-625-9409 x 224 or blacka@publicjustice.org.