

Testimony in Support of HB 746
Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Gender-Affirming Treatment
Trans Health Equity Act of 2022
Health and Government Operations Committee

March 2nd, 2022

Mx. Erin Collins Maxwell
Pronouns: They/them/theirs
Charles Village, 14th District
Chase Brexton Health Care-Center for LGBTQ Health Equity

Chair Pendergrass and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the chance to testify in support of House Bill 746.

I believe that HB 746 is important because I have seen first-hand as a Trans Care Navigator the financial and emotional burden being unable to access medically necessary care has placed on our trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming community members. A part of my role at Chase Brexton is assisting clients in navigating the gender-affirming surgical assessment process, as well as writing letters for insurance coverage, but for folks seeking facial feminization/masculinization, electrolysis, body contouring, or other procedures that Maryland Medicaid deems “cosmetic,” these conversations evolve into lengthy and emotionally-charged planning sessions of how clients can potentially even afford to undergo surgery if their insurance plan will not offer coverage and has an extensive history of denying appeals. Similarly, procedures like electrolysis, which are required by surgeons for things like vaginoplasty or phalloplasty to reduce the chance of potential infection, are enormously expensive, and the clients I have met do not often have the financial means or supports to afford to pay for these services out of pocket. Therefore, clients who simply want to live as themselves for themselves and are experiencing high levels of anxiety, major depression, and suicidal ideation as a result of their bodies not matching up with their identities are being told by the state that their care is “not necessary” when there is an abundance of evidence to suggest otherwise by major institutions such as the NASW, the APA, the AMA, the Endocrine Society, and WPATH, and I as a clinician find these barriers to care made by Maryland Medicaid to be outdated, egregious, and unjustifiable.

By supporting House Bill 746, you are telling our trans community that their voices matter. By affording them access to care that many other state Medicaid policies such as New Jersey, California, and New York have adopted as mandatory into their coverages for gender-affirming care, you are setting a precedent for creating a safe, affirming, and welcoming environment that supports and uplifts trans lives. I hope that this can be an instance in which the stories that are being shared with you all today will resonate as to why healthcare is not a privilege but is an incontestable right to be shared by everyone.

Please help our community in the fight for trans rights and be on the right side of history by supporting House Bill 746!

Thank you for your consideration,

Mx. Erin Collins Maxwell
Chase Brexton Health Care-Center for LGBTQ Health Equity
1111 N. Charles St
Baltimore, MD 21218