

Trans Maryland
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**Senate Bill #0460 Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Gender-Affirming Treatment
"Trans Health Equity Act"**
Finance Committee
February 28, 2023
Position: Support

Greetings Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and the esteemed members of the Senate Finance Committee. Trans Maryland is a multi-racial, multi-gender community power building organization for Maryland's trans community. Trans Maryland runs the state's largest name and gender marker change program, offering peer-to-peer guidance and financial assistance to Marylanders seeking a name and gender marker change. We also run the state's largest peer to peer connection space for Trans Marylanders. We represent thousands of transgender Marylanders who have detailed the barriers they face in accessing affirming medical care. The Trans Health Equity Act emerged from those conversations which highlighted to us that Maryland's current policy for transgender care is based on standards that are over 20 years out of date.

Many trans Marylanders experience gender euphoria as a result of accessing gender affirming care. We also witness the many barriers to that care, such as the 31 categorical exemptions listed in the [Maryland Medicaid Gender Transition: Covered Service, Covered Criteria, Limitations and Exclusions bulletin from March 10, 2016](#). That bulletin is based on standards of care that were out of date at the time of issuance. Modernizing this care for Maryland's trans community is of the utmost importance. The gap between services accessible via Maryland Health Connection's paid plans, and the care available to transgender Marylanders on Medicaid is widening rapidly. Marylanders with paid plans through the Maryland Health Connection are able to access one standard of gender transition care through full coverage by insurance, while low-income trans Marylanders on Medicaid are completely excluded from the exact same care. The vulnerability of this community means this gap in services easily leads to a wave of other health disparities based on the social determinants of health for trans Marylanders.

The number of trans Marylanders on Medicaid is small, approximately 2000 people, and as gender transition is unique to each individual, we know that not every trans person on Maryland Medicaid will access these services, or even any services. The small size of the community, and the urgency of the need to access gender affirming care means this is an easy gap to close. Lack of access to gender affirming care can be dangerous, imperil access to housing, employment, education, and social spaces. While fiscal notes do not take into account these waves of additional impacts to both trans people and the state due to increased costs, those connections are unavoidable when looking at the overall well-being of Maryland's trans community. When we consider the financial realities of low-income trans Marylanders, being exempted from care that is accessible to those who have paid plans means a two-tier system is in play. The cost to the individual to be denied medical care that is covered and found to be medically necessary under paid plans through the Maryland Health Connection should be enough to change this policy, but do note that these procedures are also federally reimbursable.

Modernizing gender transition care through Maryland Medicaid is an easy fix, passing the Trans Health Equity Act is a financially sound decision, a moral and ethical imperative, and brings Maryland in line with the many other states who are leading in their coverage of this care. For these reasons, **we urge a favorable report on this Bill # SB 0460**.

For more information, contact Lee Blinder, Executive Director of Trans Maryland at lee@transmaryland.org