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SB 460

Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Gender-Affirming Treatment (Trans Health Equity Act) Hearing of the Senate Finance Committee

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1:00 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 and Benefits Equity Project advocates to protect and expand access to healthcare and safety net services for Marylanders struggling to make ends meet. We support policies and practices that are designed to eliminate economic and racial inequities and enable every Marylander to attain their highest level of health. **The PJC stands in strong support of SB 460**, the Trans Health Equity Act of 2023, which would require the Maryland Medical Assistance (Medicaid) Program to cover medically necessary gender-affirming treatment.

Maryland is home to more than 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 Further, the existing list of gender-affirming care that is currently covered by Medicaid is outdated and does not cover comprehensive medically necessary and life-saving care.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 460 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 460 would increase health equity and improve health outcomes, including mental and physical health, for

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.*

transgender Marylanders. For these reasons, the Public Justice Center urges the committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report for **SB 460**. If you have any questions about this testimony, please contact Ashley Black at 410-625-9409 x 224 or blacka@publicjustice.org.