



Trans Health Equity Act of 2023
Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Gender-Affirming Treatment
Position: Favorable with Sponsor Amendments

Chair Peña-Melnyk and Members of the Health & Government Operations Committee,

My name is Joyce Jackson, I am a Senior Medical Assistant & Medical Administrator at Whitman Walker, and a member of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. We are the largest healthcare workers union in the country, with over 10,000 members in Maryland/DC. Our union supports HB283 – the Trans Health Equity Act, and we urge the Committee to issue a **favorable** report, including **sponsor amendments**. This legislation will allow low-income transgender patients to access lifesaving, medically necessary gender affirming healthcare (GAC).

The clinic where I work provides GAC. Without GAC, many of my transgender patients experience depression and isolation that lowers their quality of life. Transgender Marylanders want to be who they recognize themselves to be and to be able to live in the body they are comfortable living in no matter their financial status. Without passing the Trans Health Equity Act, the mental health of transgender Marylanders who need GAC but can't afford it will suffer. When my patients do get access to GAC, I see such a positive change in them. Their mental health and self-esteem improve drastically. That is why GAC is medically necessary.

My late brother was transgender. Back in the 70's, he did not have access to GAC at all. I wish he had the ability to get the GAC and be able to live in the body he wanted. This is one of the reasons I fight so fiercely on behalf of my transgender patients and the entire low-income transgender people of Maryland. I have a big heart and I believe *everyone*, no matter their gender or sexual orientation, deserves access to high quality, affordable healthcare.

I support Delegate Anne Kaiser's amendment to require consent from healthcare providers to have our names listed on a public directory of providers who specialize in gender-affirming healthcare, rather than mandating all providers be listed as the current bill draft requires. I urge the Committee to adopt this amendment as it is important for the safety of healthcare workers.

There should be no difference in access to healthcare through Medicaid for transgender patients in the DMV. Virginia Medicaid covers GAC and Washington DC Medicaid covers GAC, so Maryland needs to catch up and cover all GAC through Medicaid too! Please vote YES on this life saving legislation to expand access to healthcare for transgender Marylanders.

In Unity,
Joyce Jackson, Ladyjaye1@hotmail.com