



Testimony for the Senate Finance Committee

February 28, 2023

SB 460 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Gender– Affirming Treatment (Trans Health Equity Act)

FAVORABLE

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The ACLU of Maryland urges a favorable report on SB 460 which would require the Maryland Medical Assistance Program (Medicaid) to cover medically necessary gender affirming treatment.

The Maryland Medical Assistance Program currently fails to provide adequate coverage for medically necessary, gender affirming treatments for its 6,000 transgender beneficiaries. The list of treatments and surgeries that the program *does* cover is outdated and represents a fraction of the myriad ways in which gender dysphoria is remedied through medical and surgical care. Many of these more modern approaches are covered under private health insurance plans. As such, transgender beneficiaries are barred from accessing potentially lifesaving care due to their coverage status.

Gender affirming care can play an essential role in the mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing of transgender and nonbinary people. Numerous studies have shown how gender affirming care leads to improved mental health outcomes, particularly among youth.¹ According to a 2022 study of transgender individuals, gender affirming medical interventions were associated with lower odds of depression over 12 months.² Moreover, according to the American Medical Association, gender affirming care is linked to lower rates of suicide attempts and decreased substance use.³ Given the disproportionately

¹ Columbia University Medical Center. (2022, March 30). Gender-affirming Care Saves Lives. Columbia University Department of Psychiatry. Retrieved from

<https://www.columbiapsychiatry.org/news/gender-affirming-care-saves-lives>

² Tordoff, D. M., Wanta, J., & Collin, A. (2022, February 25). Mental Health Outcomes in Transgender and Nonbinary Youths Receiving Gender-Affirming Care. JAMA Network Open. Retrieved from <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2789423>

³ American Medical Association. (n.d.). Advocating for the LGBTQ Community. American Medical Association. Retrieved from <https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/population-care/advocating-lgbtq-community>

high rates of depression and suicide among transgender people, the impact of these medical interventions cannot be ignored. According to a 2022 study by the Trevor Project, 49% of transgender and non-binary youth in the Maryland seriously considered suicide in the past year.⁴ The inability to access this medically necessary care only exacerbates the problem.

This bill will increase the standard of care and standard of living for transgender Marylanders, ensuring that access to essential care is not determined by gender identity, income, or employment status. For the foregoing reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB 460.

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⁴ The Trevor Project. (2022, December 15). 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health - Maryland. The Trevor Project. Retrieved February 24, 2023, from <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/The-Trevor-Project-2022-National-Survey-on-LGBTQ-Youth-Mental-Health-by-State-Maryland.pdf>

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