



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 Lauren Reichard. I am a Registered Nurse in an Intensive Care Unit in Maryland, and I'm 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 and Washington 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, gender affirming healthcare.

As an RN, I want to be very clear that gender affirming healthcare (GAC) is medically necessary. Without GAC, transgender people experience both psychological and biological distress. Transgender people who “look” transgender face a lot of stigma that is traumatizing and damaging to their mental health. Furthermore, trans patients are less likely to seek healthcare for physical conditions like wounds and preventable illnesses -- I have had multiple patients who were transgender women that delayed coming to the hospital because they feared being stigmatized. If they had had access to affordable GAC, they may have been more confident in seeking medical treatment much sooner.

Passing the Trans Health Equity Act will of course improve access to healthcare for transgender patients by making GAC more affordable. It will also expand access because when GAC is covered by Medicaid, more medical providers will be willing to provide GAC to low-income transgender patients because the provider does not risk being stuck with the cost if a patient is not able to afford to pay their bill.

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.

In Maryland there is a consensus that healthcare decisions should be made between a patient and their medical provider when it comes to reproductive healthcare. That same logic applies to allowing us medical providers to determine with our patients that GAC is medically necessary. GAC helps trans people be able to live their lives as their true selves, and that liberating feeling improves overall quality of life. Please vote YES on this life saving legislation to expand access to healthcare for transgender Marylanders.

In Unity,
Lauren Reichard, RN
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