

Testimony in Support of HB 283
Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Gender-Affirming Treatment
Trans Health Equity Act of 2023
Health and Government Operations Committee
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Chair Peña-Melnik and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the chance to testify in support of House Bill 283. My name is Elena Wei. I am a resident of District 46. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB 283, the Trans Health Equity Act, which would expand Maryland Medicaid to cover lifesaving gender-affirming care.

The Trans Health Equity Act (THEA) addresses a critical gap in the healthcare of transgender Marylanders by ensuring Medicaid coverage for gender-affirming healthcare. Currently, Maryland Medicaid excludes many gender-affirming procedures. There is consensus in the medical community that these procedures are medically necessary and reduce suicide, abuse, discrimination, and harassment. THEA is a low-cost solution that improves the quality of life of trans Marylanders, brings Maryland Medicaid into compliance with federal law, and meets current medical standards.

I believe that HB 283 is important because trans individuals are a marginalized population in our community and need medical care and procedures to ensure physical and mental health. Receiving gender-affirming care shows 60% lower odds of moderate or severe depression and 73% lower odds of suicidality over a 12-month follow-up (Tordoff et al. Mental Health Outcomes in Transgender and Nonbinary Youths Receiving Gender-Affirming Care. JAMA Netw Open. 2022;5(2):e220978. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.0978). These services are federally reimbursable and cost only 0.005% of Maryland's Medicaid budget. Preventing long-term physical and mental health complications reduces mental health complications and suicide attempts, reducing overall healthcare costs.

Personally, my friend is transgender and procedures such as gender-affirmation/sex-reassignment surgery and laser hair removal for her face made a world of a difference in her daily life. She used to constantly be at odds with her view of herself every day, shaving multiple times a day and wearing tight underwear. These medical procedures helped her in her journey. However, these procedures were costly, and she made huge sacrifices in obtaining them, even getting the surgery in Colombia. Many people are not so unfortunate to be able to pay for the procedures on their own, and covering the cost would be immensely helpful to them.

Please do what you can to support the trans community and their health and support HB 283.

Thank you for your consideration,

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