

SUPPORT - HB 283 - Trans Health Equity Act of 2023  
House Health and Government Operations Committee  
February 14, 2023  
Testimony of Melanie Scheirer, Baltimore City

Chair Peña-Melnyk and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the chance to testify in support of house bill 283. I am a woman of transgender experience whom only recently moved to Maryland in 2022 after having lived in Washington DC and Pennsylvania prior. I realized my transgender status as a young child at the age of 8, having known something was wrong for years prior, but was unable to do anything about it before I was 29 and had the financial means to both afford treatment and endure the potential social repercussions of seeking such treatment. For me, I was only truly able to start once I became medicaid eligible in Pennsylvania years ago, following the issuance of a medical bulletin with similar language to this proposed bill. Without the guarantees of coverage Pennsylvania provided, I would never have been able to seek treatment for my gender dysphoria, which before treatment left me unable to regularly afford my own living accommodations, keep consistent employment, or engage in any social activities whatsoever. I was, in plainest terms, a depressed hermit with borderline suicidal tendencies, and the only thing that kept me going was the hope I could save enough to seek treatment for my debilitating condition.

Since gaining access to care, I successfully socially transitioned years ago, and am now married, own my own house in Baltimore, and have reestablished myself in a lucrative career. I have friends, who I can actually see and interact with offline for the first time in my life without debilitating dissociation and stress. I was quite surprised and appalled when I found out Maryland did not provide even the minimum standard of treatment recognized by contemporary medical literature and practice as necessary, and if I did not have access to these necessary treatments through employer coverage, would likely have to leave Maryland to continue seeking my medically necessary treatments.

If the state is supposed to leave no one behind, that should include us of transgender experience. To be what is otherwise recognized as a progressive state that is so far behind providing globally recognized medically necessary treatment is a failure to the people who desperately need it, like I did, and like many in Maryland do now in the absence of policy like this to provide it. I know I would personally sleep better knowing that, regardless of my employment status, my access to care would not be in jeopardy in the state of Maryland, but I more appeal for those who are in my lived experience, but have not yet had the opportunity like I did in Pennsylvania to get the medically necessary care to live a life without the crushing ailments of untreated gender dysphoria, and without the real fear of violence one has to endure as a person of transgender experience without access to surgeries meant to repair the damage our bodies endured through exposure to the wrong hormones. For most of us, we would have stopped it if we could, but as its children subjected to these effects made irreversible without surgical intervention, often decades ago, we were not given the option. So for all those of transgender experience in Maryland today, don't leave them behind now.

Thank you for your consideration,

Melanie Scheirer  
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