

**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-Melnyk and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the chance to testify in support of House Bill 283. My name is Sam Okum and 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 a crucial piece of legislation because of my previous experience working as a health advocate within the trans community in my hometown of Chicago, IL. Gender dysphoria remains a crucial mental health issue for many, at-risk LGBTQ youth. Continuing to deprive trans adolescents and young adults of the gender-affirming care they deserve will only exacerbate to the high rates of depression, discrimination, and suicide members of this community experience. Particularly against the backdrop of increasingly vitriolic rhetoric and marginalizing legislation targeted against this community in other states, it is my most sincere hope that Maryland can solidify its role as an inclusive place for all its citizens—including members of the trans community—through tangible legislative action.

I therefore urge this body to act quickly to do whatever is possible to support the transgender community of Maryland. A significant first step will be your support of HB 283.

Thank you for your consideration.

With gratitude,

Samuel Okum  
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