



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support of SB 460 - The Maryland Medical Assistance Program--Gender-Affirming Treatment (Trans Health Equity Act).

TO: Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk, Chair and Members of the House Health
and Government Operations Committee
FROM: Kari Alperovitz-Bichell, MD MPH, Advocate for Reproductive Health Care Rights
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland,
DATE: March 28, 2023

I am Kari Alperovitz-Bichell, MD representing myself as a physician and also representing the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland. I am requesting your support for **SB 460 - The Maryland Medical Assistance Program- Gender-Affirming Treatment (Trans Health Equity Act)**.

As a primary care physician who has treated many transgender and gender-diverse patients, I am very aware of the medical necessity of gender affirming medical care in general, and also of each of the specific medical services enumerated in this bill. None of these are superfluous or luxurious, they are part of what is needed to appropriately and successfully treat these patients. Furthermore, the bill's requirement that insurance denials should be made only by a clinician who is knowledgeable and experienced in providing gender affirming care is important. Even for relatively common conditions that have no stigma attached, treating physicians like me often find that insurance company denials are dictated by algorithms or insurance company employees who do not have sufficient knowledge. Given that patients in need of gender affirming care are fairly rare, and that there continues to be significant bias against them, this problem with uninformed insurance denials is likely to be exacerbated.

As a Unitarian Universalist, I am called by our First Principle to affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every human being. Therefore my faith calls on me to advocate for necessary medical care for all, including gender affirming care. Furthermore, this care should be available to all who need it, including patients insured through Medical Assistance. It should not be available to only those wealthy enough to afford it.

I personally, and we of the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry, strongly urge you to support SB 460.

Respectfully submitted,
Kari Alperovitz-Bichell, MD MPH -
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