

Testimony in Support of HB 283
Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Gender-Affirming Treatment
Trans Health Equity Act of 2023
Health and Government Operations Committee
February 14, 2023

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Gertrude Stein Society

Chair Peña-Melnyk and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the chance to testify in support of House Bill 283. My name is Arie Van Wieren. 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 access to gender-affirming care is integral to the well-being and safety of transgender Marylanders. TGD people with a history of gender-affirming surgery had significantly lower odds of past-month psychological distress, past-year tobacco smoking, and past-year suicidal ideation compared with TGD people with no history of gender-affirming surgery.” (Almazan, A. N. et al. JAMA Surg. 156, 611–618 (2021). As a first-year medical student at Johns Hopkins I have begun to witness the extent to which marginalized members of our community face drastic barriers to life-saving care. With HB 283 you have the rare opportunity to reduce one of these key barriers to integral healthcare for transgender community members while introducing a cost-saving intervention. These services are federally reimbursable and cost only 0.005% of our Medicaid budget.

Several of my close friends and colleagues have benefitted from gender-affirming care. Not only has it impacted the quality of their lives, but in many cases gender-affirming care has saved them. For these friends, access to gender-affirming care was only possible due to financial support from loved ones and access to private insurance. This life-saving care should not be limited to Marylanders who are fortunate enough to have access to proper finances.

I strongly urge you to do what you can to support transgender Marylanders and to advocate for HB 283. You will be saving lives.

Thank you for your consideration,

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The views expressed here are my own and do not necessarily reflect the policies or positions of Johns Hopkins University and Medicine, although I am pleased to note that Johns Hopkins does officially support this legislation.