

**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

Abigail Atkinson  
Pasadena, MD/Anne Arundel County  
Student at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine

Chair Peña-Melnyk and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the chance to testify in support of House Bill 283. My name is Abby Atkinson. I am a resident of District 7. 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.

As a medical student, I've spent time learning how important access to necessary care is, for both an individual and the community in which they reside. What seems simple for some (going to the doctor) can be a significant source of stress to others, due to reasons spanning everything from not having time to take off of work, not having enough insurance coverage, to stress about biases the healthcare providers might perpetuate. Even in our own state of Maryland, there are stark contrasts between the ability to access care between districts and neighborhoods. Doing everything we can as a state to improve access to care ranging from emergency to preventative will improve the wellness of our state as a whole. A healthier community in the long run is able to function better and spends less on future emergency care, as well.

As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, it's clear to me that individuals identifying as trans or nonbinary face a huge amount of discrimination in their daily lives, and that discrimination can carry over into their health care. A friend of mine in college who came out as nonbinary shared with me the struggles they faced with body dysmorphia, and eventually was able to find a care provider who agreed that a hormone replacement therapy would significantly improve their dysmorphia and the feelings of anxiety and depression that came along with that. It took a long time for their treatment to be approved, but once they were able to afford and receive the hormone replacement therapy, they slowly became more and more confident and suffered less from depression and anxiety. I saw firsthand how important gender-affirming care was in helping my friend reclaim their

life and enjoyment of living. This was a process that they struggled through, but having a supportive provider and insurance that covered their care made their experience that much easier.

Ever since I moved to Maryland in 2019, I have loved learning about my community's diverse stories and experiences. By passing the THEA into law, Maryland will help those individuals who receive Medicaid receive gender-affirming care, helping them maintain their health and wellness and contributing to the wellness of our state as a whole. I believe that by passing this legislation, health care providers will also be more open to providing the care that is federally recommended and necessary for trans and nonbinary individuals.

Please do what you can to support this community/fix this issue.  
I strongly urge you to support HB 283.

Thank you for your consideration,

Abigail Atkinson  
7721 Notley Road,  
Pasadena, MD, 21122