



**House Bill 283
Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Gender-Affirming Treatment
Trans Health Equity Act
February 14, 2023
Support**

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk, Vice Chair Kelly, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

The Trans Rights Advocacy Coalition is proud to present the public comments of **more than 200 Maryland residents** who strongly support the Trans Health Equity Act. From Montgomery County to Baltimore City to Wicomico County, the people of Maryland want to ensure that everybody – regardless of income – can receive the life-saving gender-affirming care they need to thrive. This document contains comments from trans Marylanders, loving family members and friends of trans people, mental healthcare professionals, and more, who all agree: the General Assembly must pass HB 283 and ensure that Maryland remains a safe and welcoming place for all.

Public Comments:

A few years ago I was lost. I felt ill constantly and had no recourse. 2 years ago I finally decided to start HRT, and since then my health, both physical and mental, has only improved. I've been able to improve my life and see a path forward. Every trans person deserves to have that feeling.

John Mack, Baltimore City

I have several friends and loved ones who have received gender affirming care. Their mental well-being has been positively impacted by this care. Without it, they would be left in a very unwell place and left to suffer physically and psychologically.

AJ Jensen, Baltimore City

As a cisgender queer woman, I know that my safety is intrinsically tied to that of my trans neighbors. Trans folks deserve unfettered access to the healthcare they need in order to live their best lives.

Sarah Dwyer, Prince George's County

I support THEA so my community can receive equitable Healthcare like anyone else, and so that they can live as their most authentic selves without having to jump through so many unnecessary bureaucratic hoops.

Erin Maxwell, Baltimore City

All Marylanders deserve adequate healthcare which includes gender affirming procedures.

Nicole Wrinn, Frederick County

I firmly believe everyone should get access to health care, which includes gender-affirming care. People have a right to the care medical professionals can provide and it would be unethical and create a huge risk to trans and gender queer communities to do otherwise. It is 2023. It's time to include gender affirming care.

Jacky Mueck, Howard County

Everyone deserves access to healthcare that will improve their quality and comfort of life.

Maddie, Baltimore County

Gender-affirming care is necessary for the livelihood for trans individuals.

Suzanne Montour, Baltimore County

I support THEA because we have the responsibility to protect and care for all people. Everyone has a right to autonomy and trans people are no different. To protect and affirm trans people we are saving lives AND helping people get one step closer to living a happy and fulfilled life.

Kristy Gizinski, Harford County

I'm a trans Marylander on Medicaid. It's unacceptable that we're not given coverage for all gender-affirming procedures.

Cassandra Cox, Washington County

The Trans Health Equity Act must be passed this year to protect some of the most vulnerable populations in the state. This act will help Marylanders receiving Medicaid to receive life-saving, gender affirming care at a more affordable cost. At a time when many other states are actively attacking basic human rights of our trans siblings, Maryland must step up to care for all of its citizens.

Julia Chadwick, Baltimore City

I want people, all people, to live and not die. Trans people are more than worth it.

Johnita Dickerson, Baltimore City

Access to gender affirming care has made me happier and more at peace with my body. Prior to transition, I was depressed, bleak and hopeless; now, I'm joyful, vibrant and positive. I want everyone who feels like I did to have the opportunity to become a better version of themselves.

Luisa Wayman, Anne Arundel County

I am the mother of a trans daughter. Her health, safety, and security, and the ability for her to live a long and happy life as her true self are of the utmost importance to me and my family.

Sarah Garifo, Howard County

Because all people deserve to have their medical needs met. Ignoring the needs of someone who is transgender, does not change that they are transgender, nor that they need medical care. It only means that these individuals as people will not be cared for in the way they need. Picking and choosing what medical care a specific community deserves based on the opinions of individuals outside of that community (that are misinformed and discriminatory) has consistently led to problems in our medical care system. Accepting people, and specifically individuals in the transgender community, as they are, and treating them from a medical and human perspective as such, is the least we can do to meet the needs of a community that will still face numerous hurdles feeling safe and cared for within our society.

Tai Black, Cecil County

I support THEA because gender affirming care is proven to save lives, and all people, regardless of income, deserve life saving care. I have friends who are trans, and gender affirming care has made an enormously positive impact on their lives.

Joelle Mornini, Montgomery County

Gender-affirming healthcare is a basic human right!

Sarah Fox, Montgomery County

I support THEA because it affirms the right of each person to get lifesaving care. It also affirms the existence and value of gender diversity which is an asset to our society and world at large. This law would help to set MD apart as a place where all are welcome and cared for. Many transgender people face a multitude of barriers when it comes to accessing vital services like healthcare and this is a chance to make impactful and long lasting improvements.

Ambrose L., Baltimore City

My entire voting life has been dedicated to voting for people and issues in Maryland that promote equity. I believe that Maryland needs to be on the forefront of issues like this and too often we wait until something is the obvious right choice. Let's set an example not only for the other blue states but for the country as a whole. Also I love my niece.

Kevin McIntire, Montgomery County

The Trans Health Equity Act is incredibly important when it comes to the progression of Transgender rights. Healthcare must be addressed, and provided to everyone in the most equitable manner possible. It is time that transgender individuals receive the same consideration as cisgender people.

Treston Melvin & Raquel Ndirangu, Worcester County

Trans people deserve to exist as their true selves without fearing death due to insufficient healthcare.

Emma, Somerset County

Because I want my home to be safe for me and other trans humans to feel safe in. I want to be able to grow the way I was intended to.

Finn Kitchens, Wicomico County

It's incredibly important for trans people to be protected just like every other person in America, and each state must do their part in taking care of all the types of people who live in this country.

Lori, Wicomico County

Our youngest child knew they were different very early in life. It was never a phase. They socially transitioned at 4 and changed their name and pronouns at 6. Now at 10 we are seeking puberty blockers. I don't want our insurance to be a roadblock on their journey to self acceptance.

Kim Long, Caroline County

Gender-affirming healthcare is healthcare. Life saving healthcare. My partner is trans and HRT and surgery have saved her life. Trans kids need gender-affirming care as well. Puberty blockers, being respected and validated by medical professionals - it goes so far to help trans people feel their situation is valid and that they aren't broken - when often so many of them have been told by people in their lives or society at large that they are.

Chelsea, Prince George's County

Trans people need medically-affirming care; it is essential to our survival and necessary to ensure we can be healthy adults. Too many of us deal with depression and anxiety related to medical providers not knowing how to be affirming with basic care, and we need more providers on board to provide affirming and competent care, along with far less barriers to receive all care as trans people.

Sommer Gray, Baltimore City

These treatments are necessary and all people deserve quality of life.

Emma Curran, Howard County

Because my friends are trans and I want to support them.

Dulce Antonio, Wicomico County

Every individual, regardless of gender or identification deserves access to healthcare and everything else.

Jenifer Rayne, Worcester County

As a trans person myself, having my rights to healthcare taken away from me just because of my gender identity, would be devastating.

Finn Roper, Wicomico County

Gender supporting healthcare saves lives. All medicaid recipients should be afforded the same health coverage.

Stefanie Hoffman, Wicomico County

Gender supporting healthcare saves lives. All Medicaid recipients should be afforded the same health coverage.

S.M., Montgomery County

Because I am a transgender guy and want to stay safe and have rights.

Bailey, Wicomico County

I am a firm advocate for trans rights and as someone with loved ones who are trans, I wish their struggles with healthcare upon no Maryland citizen. All trans people should not have to suffer because they lack proper healthcare coverage.

Keily Wolff, Wicomico County

As an educator and member of the community, I have seen first hand how affirming safe spaces can transform a young person's mental health and over well being. As a trans person, I can vouch for the mental health benefits of gender-affirming care.

Cassandra Whitaker, Worcester County

It allows my friend to live a very healthy and happy normal life!!

Madi, Wicomico County

Trans rights are human rights. Transgender people deserve the right to live freely without harm. They deserve all the healthcare and resources they can get to help them and potentially SAVE their lives.

Autumn Hunt, Wicomico County

Everyone should be entitled to the best medical care possible. Health care is a human right, and trans people are humans.

Mark Schroder, Baltimore County

Gender affirming care has saved the lives of many people I love. I want Maryland to be a place where all people are free to make medical decisions with their healthcare providers that help them prosper.

Jenny Egan, Baltimore City

Transgender care is healthcare! Trans people are people and deserve the same care as everyone does.

Sara Lloyd, Talbot County

We can't continue to dehumanize trans people. Healthcare for trans people saves lives. It builds a more compassionate society and not a destructive one.

Erika Franz, Anne Arundel County

Every human deserves access to healthcare and gender affirming healthcare falls under that umbrella. Denying that is just cruel.

Cori, Baltimore City

My niece is transgender, and she should have every opportunity to be who she is, inside and out.

Katie Crucillo, Dorchester County

Gender affirming care is healthcare and deserves to be provided like any other kind of health care!

Gina Weaver, Baltimore City

The Trans Health Equity Act is incredibly important when it comes to the progression of Transgender rights. Healthcare must be addressed, and provided to everyone in the most equitable manner possible. It is time that transgender individuals receive the same consideration as cisgender people.

Monisha, Worcester County

Transgender health care and gender-affirming services are not only medically necessary, they are also life-saving. By making gender-affirming healthcare accessible under Medicaid, we would be making a significant impact on the mental, physical and spiritual wellbeing of individuals across the state. As a transgender Marylander, a social worker, and a psychotherapist, I am deeply invested in seeing our state continue to support and uplift marginalized communities. I have the privilege of having my gender-affirming healthcare covered by insurance - everyone deserves the right to be able to make informed medical decisions and have those decisions covered by their insurance.

M. McKelvie, Frederick County

As a trans person this care is absolutely necessary in order for folks like myself to survive and thrive. Without it we will not make it.

Charles Henry, Baltimore City

Gender affirming health care saves lives and should be accessible to trans individuals.

Leianna, Wicomico County

I am a psychotherapist who specializes in gender-affirming mental healthcare for trans and gender-expansive Marylanders. A majority of my patients identify as trans. I see the impact of restrictive laws and attitudes on the mental health and well-being of my patients every day. This legislation would reduce shame and isolation and increase access to life-saving treatments for my patients and all trans people in MD.

Rebecca Wenstrom, Baltimore City

As a physical therapist, I'm well aware of the consequences for health outcomes of patients with gender dysphoria who are not able to receive gender affirming care. Trans folks are still marginalized by society, and healthcare inequity results in a lifetime of stress and emotional trauma that increases the cost burden to the system and can result in outcomes as severe as suicide. There is strong evidence to support that gender affirming care saves lives. It seems common sense that a treatment strategy with such strong research to back it up should be a part of Medicaid benefits. I support THEA because I care about the health of every individual in Maryland.

Elizabeth Bellinger, Baltimore City

My daughter is trans and I agree that all humans should be able to get the healthcare they need to be their best.

Lisa Feingersh, Montgomery County

I support THEA because gender affirming care saved my life. I have suffered from severe depression most of my life, until I came out when I was 25. Being able to start testosterone was a game changer. This year, I'm having two gender affirming surgeries and I'm excited to finally feel myself.

Shawn Finner, Wicomico County

Gender affirming healthcare saved my life, and those of others who are close to me. With many trans youth facing unsupportive parents, many of them turn to paying for gender affirming care out of pocket and/or look into seeking their own coverage through public insurance. The expansion of Medicaid coverage to include gender affirming care in Maryland would reduce the financial and emotional stresses of having to pay out of pocket for medically necessary care, especially in the face of other burdens of discrimination that the trans community faces.

Theo Ng, Montgomery County

As a trans man myself, I want to make sure there are plenty of opportunities for transgender youth to receive the help they seek and need. Not only is it so difficult to ask for help, it's incredibly difficult to receive it, many U.S. medical hospitals still view gender affirming treatments as unnecessary, dangerous, or merely aesthetic procedures as many kids AND adults are struggling to be comfortable as they are, were doing our best to be comfortable in the bodies we have but we shouldn't be consistently denied access to healthcare treatments that could be lifesaving.

Timothy O'Malley, St. Mary's County

I'm a trans non binary person and without equitable access gender affirming care, I probably wouldn't be alive anymore. It is vital to my existence, and my mental and physical health.

SJ Janjua, Baltimore City

Every person regardless of their sexual orientation deserves to live with dignity and acceptance and to be treated fairly, especially in the medical world.

Kathleen Olson, Montgomery County

All Maryland citizens have the right to fair and equitable treatment in the state, without prejudice. All state and federal resources are for all of its citizens, not selectively given out to only those members of the society who adhere to the governing body's personal beliefs and values. Please pass this critically important legislation for all trans citizens of our community.

Mark Olson, Montgomery County

Trans people deserve to have their medical and mental needs met. It is unacceptable to deny them the medical care that keeps them healthy and safe.

Brandi Smith, Washington County

I'm a trans person who has been out for the last 2+ years. I've been on hormones for a year and a half. Having access to hormones so I can live my true self, I have never been happier with who I am. I used to struggle with self esteem issues and never quite fit in with others. Now that I have been able to live as my true self, I have been able to experience joy in a way that I could never do before. It is important that all people, no matter who they are, are able to access HRT so they can live as their true selves and experience the joy that comes with it.

Randy Helton, Baltimore City

Access to trans care is life saving and should not be a privilege for the few. Why should I have to jump through hoops to get hormonal care when cis people can just ask? Why do the circumstances of my hormones affect coverage? How does it affect anyone but me? Why should it be up to the state why I should or should not be able to be who I am? A majority of us need Medicaid to survive, and an expansion of provided services is long overdue.

Sybillie, Baltimore City

Research and history shows us that gender affirming care is life saving, and all Marylanders deserve equal and equitable access to receiving life affirming healthcare. I implore all readers and members of the medical community to support the Trans Health Equity Act which is a low-cost solution to bringing adequate care for all and bringing Maryland Medicaid into compliance with federal law and modern medical standards.

Feitian Ma, Baltimore City

Everyone deserves access to life-saving healthcare!

Maia Eskin, Montgomery County

Transgender surgical care, as recognized in the most recent standards from the World Professional Association of Transgender Health, are the best known treatment for the recognized condition of gender dysphoria by consensus of medical experts across the world. Failure to provide care to the minimum of these standards set by many states and health care providers is unjust and cruel to a marginalized and often persecuted population with a medical condition seeking known effective treatments. Continuing to fail to provide access to care is Maryland continuing to condemn its transgender population to unnecessary suffering and often substantial endangerment in just going about their lives. When there is known effective treatment, and none is offered, that is evil. Take care of your citizens instead.

Melanie Scheirer, Baltimore City

Our trans community needs to know that their health care rights are protected. The statistics are staggering on suicide due to inability to receive gender-affirming healthcare. Keep trans individuals safe!

Mimi Kress, Montgomery County

Gender-affirming care saves lives. Maryland should ensure its policies are up to date with federal regulations and expert medical consensus.

Lauren Bopp, Montgomery County

Healthcare services should be available, and between a patient and their care provider regardless of the patient's financial standing. When a person's healthcare needs are addressed they have better mental health outcomes which leads to higher productivity. Gender affirming services are necessary healthcare and all healthcare should be accessible to all who need it, especially those most financially vulnerable.

Yahmilah Berkley, Montgomery County

Gender affirming care is not just surgery and hormones. It can be therapy to help you understand yourself or to help others understand you. I myself don't want any medical intervention (other than hair removal), but when I was able to get help to understand myself and figure out how to help others to understand me, it made a huge difference in my life and mental health. No one should have to suffer because they can't afford life-saving care.

Mychel Vandover, Montgomery County

Gender-affirming healthcare is necessary and saves lives. It needs to be covered by Medicaid, just like every other type of healthcare. Trans people are depending on the government to do the right thing.

Timothy Vandover, Montgomery County

I have paid over \$30K in electrolysis beard reduction. This was and is a tremendous financial burden on me. This should not be an elective procedure. This legislation would acknowledge that being transgender requires necessary body modifications that include electrolysis.

Bonnie Smith, Baltimore County

I have a transgender stepdaughter who resides with her mom in Maryland. The changes and joy that she has experienced in being out are beautiful. To be able to aid her emotional growth with physical support would be amazing.

Zahos Laura, Washington County

As a nurse I support this bill because it's a basic right for people to be able to choose the healthcare they want to receive without discrimination from healthcare providers working directly with patients and for those who provide care coverage like Medicaid. Gender affirming care is an evidence-based practice that allows our Maryland citizens to live a healthier, more fulfilling life. It is not for me as a nurse to decide how and why people engage in healthcare and it isn't Medicaid's either, healthcare adjusts to the needs of the people and public health issues. There are more than enough heartbreaking and startling statistics in regards to the LGBTQ especially trans community losing rights to their bodies and minds, Maryland should be an exception and refuse to allow Marylanders to be treated less based on sex, race, gender, income, religion, abilities, etc. As a human that chooses to live, work, and pay taxes in Maryland, I believe trans affirming care is absolutely without any question a right and should be covered by Maryland Medicaid.

Elizabeth Spradley, Baltimore City

I believe transgender people need that care to affirm their mental health and to allow their bodies to be seen how they feel. I know many transgender adolescents and adults struggling and they need to be able to get life-affirming care - without it, many will not survive their internal mental health struggle.

Christine Pappas, Harford County

I am a trans male myself and I think that getting the medical assistance we need is important.

Lohgann Dayn, Wicomico County

Gender-affirming care is life-changing for trans people. If you're poor and trans and on Medicaid, you basically have no options for care besides waiting and hoping. This act would change that and improve so many people's lives.

Ross Tajvar, Prince George's County

They are God's children and deserve to be treated as such, need to be treated with respect and dignity.

Don Brunner, Prince George's County

I am lucky enough to have employer-provided health insurance coverage. With it, I was able to receive counseling on medications and procedures, therapy, hormone replacement therapy medication, and bottom surgery. I am so much happier now than I was before I started my transition several years ago, and I believe that everyone should have the ability to pursue gender-affirming care that I did. It makes me sad that right now, not everyone can.

Maggie, Baltimore County

I'm a trans woman who wants equality for everyone. My life is hard enough already and I need more help to make my life better. Also including other people as well.

Michelle Phipps, Howard County

As a mental health counselor, a trans ally, and a community member, I believe that gender affirming care is suicide prevention and therefore, life-saving care. It is vital that we ensure access to all gender affirming care for anyone who needs it.

Ann Brokmeier, Baltimore City

As an employee of Johns Hopkins and a parent of a trans child, I support you.

Jennifer Golling, Baltimore City

Because political talking points should never be the reason medical consensus is overridden, especially if the outcome will harm and, or, prevent the pursuit of life, liberty, etc.

Dana Stone, Allegheny County

I am a trans human who is extremely grateful to have Gender Affirming Care. I am also the LGBTQ+ Affirming Care Coordinator at my therapy practice. LGBTQ+ affirming care is extremely important, and reduces anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, and generally improves overall mental health and physical health outcomes for LGBTQ+ people.

Katie Dant, Baltimore County

I support my neighbors and family members [being able to] live in their truth and have the legal protections they deserve.

Kailah Carden, Baltimore City

Trans rights are human rights. Period.

Kayani Turner, Baltimore City

I support THEA because trans Marylanders deserve the same quality of life and access to healthcare as all other Marylanders. Plenty of research makes it clear that gender-affirming care is life-saving, and I personally have several friends who have gotten gender-affirming care that has improved their quality of life to an incredible degree. As a cisgender Marylander, I stand with trans Marylanders and their right to gender-affirming healthcare.

Meghan Balot, Baltimore City

Trans citizens deserve to have a voice over their body and over their representation! Let's love, respect, accept our trans peers and elders!!

Stephanie Lindo-Washington, Anne Arundel County

Because whatever a person identifies as, THEY ARE STILL HUMAN BEINGS. Human beings who still deserve respect and should not be denied health care.

Alex Kenlon, Wicomico County

Gender-affirming healthcare has literally saved my life. Anything that saves lives should be available to everyone who needs it. Healthcare systems exist to keep people as healthy as they can be. Just because 93% of folks don't get appendectomies doesn't mean healthcare systems shouldn't try to help the other 7% survive. The World Health Organization affirms that healthcare is a human right. Trans people are human and we deserve this right.

Ashley Sterner, Baltimore City

Access to healthcare saves trans lives. Trans people deserve dignity and equality.

Isabella, Worcester County

Getting access to gender affirming care substantially improved my mental health and quality of life across the board. All Marylanders should be able to access the essential care they need regardless of their economic status, and the efficacy of gender affirming care has been proven by medical studies and upheld by major medical organizations including the AMA, the AAP, and the APA.

Connor, Montgomery County

I have a number of trans friends who have had gender reaffirming surgeries and it has made a world of difference. They are happier and more confident in the bodies they inhabit. My friends are lucky enough to have private health insurance, but I think every trans person who needs it should have equal access to it, including those on Medicare.

Colleen Parker, Montgomery County

I spent 30 years knowing I was transgender and thinking there was nothing I could do about it. I spent 30 years waiting to die because I knew I wasn't happy and thought I never could be. I don't wish that pain on anyone especially when all I needed was a clear path to help and this act can offer that to others.

Philecia Hoover, Baltimore City

We cannot leave trans folks behind in getting appropriate gender-affirming healthcare. It's a life or death situation.

Aimee Harmon-Darrow, Baltimore City

It is extremely well-documented that gender-affirming healthcare saves lives. Unfortunately much of it is also very expensive, making it out of reach for many people, especially less advantaged people. Everyone deserves access to quality, life-saving care, and the THEA would ensure that lower income Marylanders could obtain the care they need.

Rylie, Howard County

I support the Trans Health Equity Act as a nonbinary individual because every transgender person in Maryland deserves the same access to gender-affirming healthcare that I have been privileged to receive. My insurance covered my hormone replacement therapy, and will likely at the very least partially cover the gender-affirming surgeries I intend to receive. I have a friend here who is unable to access hormone replacement therapy because Medicaid does not cover it, and she cannot afford to cover it. This deeply upsets me because it is significantly impacting her quality of life and her mental health is suffering as a result. She deserves to receive the life-saving treatments that I was so quickly and easily afforded.

Zoe Sharp, Anne Arundel County

I am a trans woman on medicaid who is DIRECTLY impacted due to lack of coverage from my plan. I have been denied coverage for treatment in the form of hormone replacement therapy. This act could directly change my life in the way I need it to right now. Thank you for hearing me out.

Sarah Roberts, Anne Arundel County

I support the THEA because I have first hand seen the impact that access to gender affirming healthcare can have on a person. My spouse is trans and their quality of life and happiness has benefited from accessing gender affirming healthcare with our private insurance. Knowing that Marylanders who access healthcare through Medicaid are denied this same opportunity is unacceptable.

Brittany Johnstone, Baltimore City

Everyone should have access to whatever healthcare improves their lives, whether it's insulin, mental healthcare, physical therapy, blood pressure medication...we are all one human race and should be treated equally.

Sarah, Carroll County

Everyone deserves healthcare opportunities. It should not depend on where you live or who you are.

Kay Schuyler, Baltimore County

Healthcare is a human right. No one should be denied health care because of where they live or who they are.

James Schuyler, Baltimore County

As a pediatric critical care nurse, I have had too many teens and children come to my unit after trying to kill themselves because of the lack of support that they have, whether financial or social. This isn't about providing care only to adults. This is about providing preventive care to teens and young adults. Medicaid already pays for these medications and procedures for other types of patients. Let's rewrite policy so that trans individuals also can get access to these treatments.

Shelby Blevins, Anne Arundel County

I support THEA because equitable access to health care services shouldn't be decided by income. This is particularly the case when young people are estranged from their families after disclosing their gender identities to them. The negative effects on the mental health of people who wish to transition, but are unable to, including dying by suicide, are too great to ignore.

Keri Jowers, Baltimore City

Because everyone deserves the right to live their life as their true self.

Elizabeth, Montgomery County

Access to health care is a basic human right for all people, regardless of their gender identity. Denying coverage for gender-affirming care is an unjust and discriminatory practice based on nothing more than ignorance and ideology. This practice must end.

Carl Graziano, Howard County

Gender-affirming care is life-saving healthcare. Covering it is an absolute necessity.

Daniel Tabor, Baltimore City

I cannot stand silently while fellow Americans are actively discriminated against and their liberties restricted by a government founded for personal freedom. Do not be the shame of our children; be a role model for the nation. Support this Act, and the rights of all people.

Erin Hysom, Montgomery County

Because I'm a nurse and I care about all of my patients, including those that are trans. Because I'm best friends with trans people. Because my kids might be trans. Because I'm a good human.

Crystal Guengerich, Baltimore City

It is critical that low-income transgender Marylanders receive gender-affording healthcare in order to support their physical and mental health.

Mary Haas, Montgomery County

Gender-affirming healthcare should be comprehensive, and available to all who need it.
Without quality care, many trans people suffer, some die.

Naomi Patton, Prince George's County

Without Gender Affirming Care for my child, they may not be here. All people should be able to find the care they need no matter what race, gender, or ethnicity. Without this care individual lives will be lost. Care is not denied based on ethnicity or race so why should it be limited due to gender? A human is a human.

Jennifer Roussillon, Howard County

I support this legislation because I have a family member who this affects. It is a human right to have appropriate health care and to live their life in the body they know they belong in. Please pass this legislation so that all humans can live healthy lives.

Kristin Meadows, Howard County

Trans people need and deserve gender-affirming care. As a Marylander currently enrolled in a Medicaid plan, it is important to me that the program comes into compliance with federal law and meets current medical standards. As we are seeing a rise in anti-Trans legislation, Maryland must set an example and affirm that trans Marylanders can have safe, affirming, and prosperous lives - access to needed medical care is an important piece of this.

Rianna Eckel, Baltimore City

I support this because even private insurance companies are being discriminatory. If the government cannot support in covering medications, treatments, procedures, etc. for the Trans Community, then what chance does anyone else have? Make it a human right so that everyone gets the care they need. The government should cover these expenses for trans folks; it's lifesaving, and people are much more likely to be responsible, contributing members of society when they are supported by basic human rights.

Carrie Heath, Howard County

Because it would provide people like me and my friends who are trans and low-income with life-saving gender affirming healthcare on Medicaid.

Saoirse Gowan, Prince George's County

I'm a mental health provider and work quite extensively with trans clients. I can certainly vouch for the need for trans affirming and equitable access to healthcare specific to their needs. I have seen firsthand the mental decline that occurs for my clients denied treatment for a variety of reasons, as well as the dramatic improvement that happens the first time they start hormone treatment or are provided with affirming healthcare. THEA is absolutely necessary and should just be an equal right that we shouldn't even be discussing or having to vote on. Please allow these beautiful individuals that I see every week access to the same rights as cisgender Americans.

Lauren Ortiz, Anne Arundel County

I am a therapist who sees all too often how trans people are impacted by things like lack of health care coverage and access to gender affirming surgeries. This would help ease that.

Krista Verrastro, Baltimore County

We need to ensure that trans Marylanders have the gender affirming healthcare they need and it should be able to be accessed by Medicaid. This legislation will save lives and should be passed as soon as possible.

Eileen Singleton, Howard County

Everyone deserves access to safe and beneficial medical care decided between them and their doctor. Gender affirming healthcare has vigorous research to show that it is safe and has positive outcomes. There's no reason for it to be denied by anyone who isn't receiving, providing, or researching it.

Concetta G., Caroline County

Because I want my daughter not to become another statistic. I want her to thrive and have the full life she deserves.

Enidia Santiago, Anne Arundel County

This is simple and easily saves lives.

Nicholas Brown, Anne Arundel County

My kid is transgender and am very concerned when they turn 26 and come off of my employer-provided health insurance they will not have low-income health care options if needed. Also I have met so many low-income trans youth whose parents do not accept them nor help support them. I have attended many healthcare appointments with my kid and know how important it is to have access to gender-affirming healthcare.

Melanie Keller, Anne Arundel County

As a social worker, therapist, and mental health professional, gender affirming healthcare saves lives. Marylanders need access to lifesaving care.

Melina Maule, Baltimore City

I'm a therapist and have people in my personal and professional life who are transgender or non-binary. Trans people are at high risk of suicide and barriers to healthcare access contribute to that problem.

Lauran Reagan, Anne Arundel County

As the parent of a trans child, I strongly support this life-saving legislation.

Ying Matties, Howard County

I'm a mental health therapist who works with a lot of trans folks. Gender-affirming care is life saving medical treatment that should be treated no differently than other life saving medical treatment. It should be accessible to everyone, regardless of their income.

Rebecca Gibson, Baltimore County

Everyone deserves healthcare no matter the reason.

Claritza M., Howard County

I support THEA because trans people deserve their health right, just like everyone else!

Peng Zhang, Baltimore City

I support THEA because Maryland needs to be a safe and welcoming place for everyone, including our transgender residents. Listen to the medical community; its members are telling us that this is life-saving care. In addition, why is the state out of compliance with federal law covering gender-affirming care?

Sandra Graziano, Howard County

Gender-affirming healthcare is transformative and lifesaving; equitable access to it is necessary for the well-being of not just the trans community, but also the many cisgender people who have a trans person in their life in some capacity. Lowering barriers to healthcare should be a priority for everyone but especially marginalized groups such as the trans community. Equitable healthcare = happy and healthy individuals and communities, which strengthens our society as a whole.

Ash Baker, Howard County

Everyone deserves to be able to be the gender they want to be. This will make people who aren't the gender they were born with happier and healthier in the long run.

Holly French, Howard County

THEA would show that Maryland values trans lives. Covering gender affirming care under Medicare would grant many trans Maryland residents access to necessary care that they would not otherwise have access. Trans people should not be responsible to pay for their medically necessary procedure. During a time when many states are passing legislation stripping away trans rights, Maryland should stand as a beacon of hope for trans people and pass this legislation.

Glenn Burnett, Montgomery County

All individuals deserve inclusive care. We can't say we don't discriminate but then provide care that is not inclusive of that.

Carlada Razmus, Anne Arundel County

As a clinical psychologist working with youth and adults who identify as transgender, THEA is critical to the livelihood, stability, and safety of our community. Without such, we will continue to see rates of self-harm, suicide, and mental health issues within the trans community, which will ultimately create more costs for our health care system.

Kara Koenig, Baltimore County

We're not yet able to stop transphobic people from advancing bills to threaten trans rights. Those threats to trans rights are a constant reminder that the threat to trans people's lives are real and persistent. But by entrenching and furthering trans rights we not only improve the lives of trans people, we show they have allies, and that we will fight to entrench their rights so they become as difficult as possible to dislodge. We combat fear by persistently building a world that is safe for our trans friends and loved ones.

Cameron LaFortune, Baltimore County

As a non-binary Marylander, having hair removal as part of the definition of gender-affirming care is extremely important to me. Dysphoria takes many forms and it's extremely frustrating when insurance assumes you are a binary trans person and will cover SRS but refuse to cover hair removal even if hair is the #1 trigger of your dysphoria and you don't want SRS, which is my case.

Mark Buhl-Eaton, Howard County

Gender-affirming care including surgeries is Medically Necessary, as documented by ALL health-related professional associations in this country (eg, American Psychological Association, American Medical Association) and discrimination is outlawed by the Affordable Care Act. Not covering gender-affirming surgeries is discrimination. Period.

Kris Gebhard, Baltimore City

It genuinely saved my life and made my life worth living again and it's done this for so many others in my life as a trans person and as a licensed clinical therapist over the last decade.

Shir, Baltimore City

I support all people in Maryland living in their truths and having full access to the healthcare that allows them to do so. THEA is lifesaving, without a doubt, because gender affirming care truly keeps trans people alive, supports us to thrive, and be the unique contributors to our rich society that we are all meant to be. As a trans person living in Baltimore City and a health care professional licensed in Maryland, I want to feel confident that we are showing up and caring for people of all genders equitably!

Britt Walsh, Baltimore City

As a healthcare provider, I believe it's important that EVERY human has access to care. I provide affirming-care as a mental health therapist and have encountered barriers to trans clients being able to access appropriate care when they are low-income or older. It's important that every Maryland individual is able to receive services.

Shari Cain, Baltimore County

It can be difficult, if not impossible, for many trans individuals to access care that can save their lives. And those that can often face countless barriers of access to those services from incorporative and uncaring insurance systems and providers. The Trans Health Equity Act goes a long way to removing those barriers and providing the care needed to provide Maryland's trans community with agency over their lives that they never had before. This would be a ray of hope in a world that seems to be closing in around the trans community at every turn in our current political landscape. THEA must pass to save and to celebrate the lives of our trans siblings so that they may continue to enrich all of our lives and the state of Maryland.

Emma, Baltimore City

Gender affirming care is critical, life or death medical treatment! Not providing this to folks on Medicaid is discriminatory and contributes to health disparities.

Rachel Romeo, Prince George's County

Gender affirming treatment such as hormone treatment, facial feminization surgery, and chest masculinization surgery are essential for many transgender people's mental health and for their safety in public. I have been helped immeasurably by gender affirming care, and it is the right of all Marylanders that need it to have it with reach regardless of their financial means.

Maeve Mulholland, Howard County

It just makes sense. These services are a benefit to ourselves and to our community members. There is medical consensus to back this up in case anyone has any doubts. There also seems to be a legal imperative to do this since there is federal law requiring this.

Diego Contreras, Baltimore City

This legislation is critically needed to provide life saving medically necessary care to transgender and gender diverse individuals. The current exclusions for Medicaid patients is discriminatory and serves to further disparities for patients who already have more financial barriers than patients with other insurance types. THEA is needed to correct this situation.

Jessica Rothstein, Baltimore County

Because we know how critically important gender-affirming healthcare is to promoting life.

Rachel LaFleur, Baltimore City

Availability of healthcare coverage for trans youth saves lives, improves health and mental health outcomes.

Lauren DeMarco, Harford County

As a psychologist, I have seen the devastating effects for transgender clients when they do not receive gender-affirming health care and mental health care. Transgender individuals are at higher risk for suicide. THEA is an essential first step in saving lives.

Maria Zimmitti, Montgomery County

Everyone should have access to the healthcare they need. Creating barriers that increase mental health crises and suicide are not productive to the kind of society we are trying to create. If we are trying to improve everyone's quality of life, then we need to support each other in order to save lives.

Katelyn Tjarks, Howard County

I support this act because it will allow low income trans Marylanders to live with dignity and access gender-affirming care that is currently only accessible to those with the funds to cover it. As a transgender person myself, and a health care provider, I know hundreds of people whose lives would be dramatically improved were they able to access even some of these procedures. The inability to access these procedures can also put some of our most vulnerable trans individuals in dangerous situations, because being openly transgender is not safe in every part of our community. Many of these procedures make it possible for trans individuals to "pass," meaning that others around them would not have any idea that they are transgender. Though that is not important to all of us, it is critical for some people to feel safe in their neighborhoods, to access employment, and feel safe in the community at large. The ability to access facial feminization surgery, for example, could be the difference between a trans woman living or dying, given the amount of discrimination and prejudice that sector of our community faces. This act would allow Maryland to set a strong example in this time when gender-affirming care is under attack in other parts of this country, and I hope for the lives of transgender Marylanders that the legislature passes this important bill.

Jess Romeo, Prince George's County

This is an equity issue. No ifs no buts. Life is hard enough for people trying to affirm their identity in a world that discriminates against them. No Trans or Gender expansive person makes the decision to embark on such an arduous journey frivolously. We owe it to them to make this state safer to live in.

Doha Chibani, Montgomery County

Because trans rights are human rights and access to care is imperative to well being.

Elizabeth Haring, Baltimore City

It is so important to support the mental and physical well being of those who identify as trans. This is a growing portion of our society and their needs should be recognized and honored.

Vivian Morgan, Baltimore County

Trans people are people. Period. They deserve all benefits/treatments/attention anyone else might get.

Zoe Alpert, Montgomery County

I support the THEA because transgender medical care should be considered a basic human right. Providing access to care for transgender patients will not only result in improved outcomes for the patient population, but can result in improvements in the healthcare industry overall. Current research is showing that medical providers are interested in and do want education on working with and providing care for transgender and gender non-conforming patients. Consistent barriers are outdated educational materials and outdated laws designed to prevent providers from giving care. As a student currently working towards a masters in nursing, I feel strongly that all patients are worthy of human-centered care that is built on respect. Currently our laws regarding affirming care for transgender patients denies human rights and human dignity. I stand with the THEA.

Miriam Cummons, Baltimore City

Transgender Marylanders need to be able to receive Medicaid coverage for gender-affirming healthcare. Many gender-affirming procedures are not currently covered by Medicaid. These procedures are critical to the emotional and physical well-being of transgender individuals.

Bethany Brand, Baltimore City

Gender affirming healthcare is a human right and a mental health necessity.

Benna Sherman, Anne Arundel County

Trans rights are human rights. ALL humans deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

Ellen Burgess, Montgomery County

Gender-affirming procedures are medically necessary. This is a low-cost solution that will improve the quality of life of Marylanders.

Carly Hunt, Baltimore County

This is critical for kids' mental and physical health, and for their families' well-being.

Dana O'Brien, Montgomery County

The Trans Health Equity Act is important for people who identify as Trans and are in need of gender affirming procedures that will improve the quality of their lives. Most have experienced a lifetime of bullying, discrimination and harassment.

Monya Cohen, Montgomery County

I think everyone should be true to their authentic selves.

Brenda Prevas, Baltimore County

I strongly support this because health care is a basic human right and our trans friends, neighbors and community members are suffering needlessly when they are denied this type of care.

Abbie Ellicott, Anne Arundel County

Because equality matters and everyone is deserving of this.

Thalia Kirimlis, Montgomery County

Everyone has the right to affirming, safe care!

Jaclyn Halpern, Montgomery County

As a psychologist I can affirm both through my familiarity with the research and my experience as a clinician working with trans folks that this is essential to their physical and mental health.

Jessica Dunn, Baltimore City

As a psychology professor who has taught Human Sexuality and has treated a number of trans children, I feel that providing psychical and mental health care to children who believe that they are in the wrong body. Both Kennedy Krieger and National Children's Hospital do amazing work in this area. Many of these children receive their health insurance through Medicaid.

Mindy Milstein, Baltimore County

All Americans should be able to access gender affirming care!

Jacob Roth, Montgomery County

I believe in equal rights for all individuals, and quality of life is a basic human right.

Briana Estes, Baltimore City

I believe transgender people have the same rights to health care for their medical concerns as any other person.

Tom Holman, Montgomery County

Gender-affirming healthcare saves lives. We need to pass the Trans Health Equity Act (THEA) and ensure that trans Marylanders can access gender-affirming healthcare under Medicaid.

Ethan McNary, Baltimore County

It is a basic human right to have equal access to health care evidence treatments for those whose identities do not necessarily reflect the gender assigned at birth.

Janice Caro, Montgomery County

Because trans folks who have Medicaid are experiencing oppression by being denied access to gender-affirming procedures. This is transphobia and unjust.

Bernasha Anderson, Montgomery County

Lack of gender-affirming care is fatal. There is no excuse for adding barriers to care for trans individuals.

Shari Kim, Baltimore City

Equality across all resources is an important goal, and this includes gender affirming care.

Joyce Cooper-Kahn, Anne Arundel County

I believe access to gender affirming healthcare will improve the health and wellbeing of transgender individuals.

Jin Northmann, Baltimore County

I am concerned about the health and mental health outcomes of all transgender individuals. Access to health care that will improve mental health and physical health outcomes is critical!

Beth Warner, Prince George's County

How could I not? Everyone should be granted access to ALL the care they need and deserve.

Amy Brown, Anne Arundel County

I have a 7 year old trans/non-binary child. At the age of 5, my child began to tell us that they are a different gender than what was assigned at birth. Since then, my child has been asking questions related to puberty and expressing signs of being uncomfortable with their body. I know that gender affirming healthcare is life saving.

Rachel Pathak, Baltimore City

I think it is very important to provide necessary medical care to all that need it. Passing this will ensure medical coverage for necessary procedures to our most vulnerable.

Pamela Smith, Howard County

I have seen individuals' overall functioning significantly improve when they have felt more comfortable in their bodies.

Leslie Zirkin, Montgomery County

Because everyone deserves healthcare that treats ALL of them. Because we can't just decide that some aspects of care aren't necessary.

Camilla Reminsky, Baltimore City

It is imperative that every American have the right to the healthcare they need. That is one measure of a civilized society. Maryland needs to be a leader on this. We need to care for and about all of our citizens!

Jennifer Haber, Carroll County

My name is Mark Ridderhoff, my pronouns are he/his, and I am The President of Baltimore Pflag. I support bill HB283, the Trans Health Equity Act. I urge the Committee to issue a favorable report, including sponsor amendments. This legislation will allow low-income transgender patients to access lifesaving, medically necessary gender affirming healthcare. Affordable healthcare should be for everyone, no exclusions, no exceptions. Please support this bill so our fellow Maryland citizens can prosper and grow.

Mark Ridderhoff, Baltimore City

I support THEA because the procedures it would cover are medically necessary to treat some cases of gender dysphoria.

Catherine Smithmyer, Queen Anne's County

All major medical, psychological, and psychiatric organizations are in agreement that gender-affirming healthcare is medically necessary. It is a basic human right and is often life-saving.

Courtney Cook, Baltimore City

Gender affirming care is so important and necessary for everyone in the trans community. Risk of depression and suicide is so high but can be easily reduced by just giving everyone access to the care they need. This could be the difference between life and death for some.

Rae, Baltimore County

Transgender people deserve equitable healthcare.

Louisa Meyerson, Anne Arundel County

There are plenty of transgender people that I am friends with who can't afford gender affirming health care. It would help them if their gender affirming procedures were covered.

Joey Silkworth, Anne Arundel County

I work at a Safeway and far too often, I have seen my poor transgender coworkers unable to receive the lifesaving gender affirming treatment they need. Too often, I have noticed my transgender friends at work teeter on the edge of suicide because of their inability or in even worse cases, the loss of an ability to receive gender affirming medical treatment due to their inability to pay for it. By including transgender Americans in the Maryland Medical Assistance Program, we can save hundreds of lives and brighten hundreds of others.

Kasey Brown, Anne Arundel County

I myself am an individual who's generally a part of that community. Healthcare, both local and worldwide, ignores the similar needs of cis and transgender pupils. Discrimination in high within every level of healthcare, so to have help could make a huge difference

Ashton, Anne Arundel County

Without this act, the lives of transgender people, including children and those living in poverty will be greatly impacted. Suicide statistics among trans people are already high and not being able to get life saving gender affirming care will not make the statistics any lower. We can start by making a difference in our local community and change medical standards in Maryland, which will hopefully influence other states to rework harmful anti trans laws.

Olivia Mawhinney, Anne Arundel County