

**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 Drew Bidmead. 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 of the immense impact it can have on the lives of countless transgender individuals of all ages. It will certainly improve access to essential gender-affirming care for adults, and I want to emphasize the hope it will instill in our transgender youth. As the older brother of a transgender individual, I witnessed firsthand his tortuous journey of realization, acceptance, and, finally, a complete transition. For many transgender youth, accepting their gender identity and coming out to peers and family comes with devastating rejection. This is likely one of the reasons that, according to the CDC, 35% of transgender teens report attempting suicide – it was certainly a key factor in my brother's years-long battle with his own mental health. Even with the great fortune of supportive parents, it took over two years to find the accessible and qualified therapists, endocrinologists, and reconstructive surgeons he needed. The incredible healthcare team we found undoubtedly saved his life. He has never been so happy, confident, and successful. I share this story with you because I want to highlight how absolutely critical his access to gender-affirming medical care was in transforming his quality of life – without them, he might not still be here today.

Unfortunately, success stories like my brother's are still relatively uncommon. Even if transgender youth are lucky enough to have parents tirelessly advocating for them, many will still face insurmountable geographic and financial barriers that leave youth and their families feeling helpless. If we do nothing, we concede that a 35% suicide attempt rate in our transgender youth is an acceptable price to pay to uphold an outdated system rooted in transphobia.

I strongly urge you to stand up for some of our most vulnerable youth by supporting HB 283.

Thank you for your consideration,

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*Disclaimer: 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.*