

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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Chair Peña-Melnyk and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the chance to testify in support of House Bill 283. My name is Kyra Halbert-Elliott. I am a resident of District 45. 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 I have witnessed firsthand how gender affirming therapy, from hormone therapy to reconstructive surgery, saves lives. My own best friend, who I will list as MK, very nearly killed herself after her family cut her off in high school due to her identity as a trans woman. She tried to take her own life several times, for the harassment, shame, and discrimination she faced as a masculine-presenting trans woman was horrific. With the help of free clinics and working a full time job (in addition to studying engineering) MK was able to afford hormone therapy and has become an entirely new person. The change from when I first met her to now is astounding. Once a poor student, she has risen to the top of our undergraduate school's engineering program and is thrilled to be able to pursue the work she loves and excels at, free from discrimination and oppressive hate. Her own transformation is in line with the hard evidence that gender-affirming care is life altering and cost effective. In Maryland alone, gender affirming care can lead to an 84% reduction in suicide attempts and reduce costs resulting from long-term physical and mental health complications. Trans people who are able to access gender affirming care are much more able to contribute to society and the economy free from mental health complications, housing discrimination, and job discrimination.

End with a call to action!

I strongly urge you to support the Trans Health Equity Act of 2023. Save costs for the state of Maryland. Save lives like those of my best friend. Of someone's child, cousin, sibling, friend.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kyra Halbert-Elliott
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