

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,

My name is Lily Amara Pastor; I am a nursing student at Anne Arundel Community College, a resident of District 40, and a 36-year-old transgender woman. This testimony is in support of HB283, the Trans Health Equity Act, which would ensure that Maryland Medicaid will provide comprehensive gender-affirming care. While I was the Outreach Director for Trans Maryland, I saw first-hand how many transgender individuals in the state lack access to gender-affirming care due to the high cost and relative impoverishment of transgender people in Maryland. This bill would greatly expand access to this lifesaving, scientifically-supported healthcare, improving the lives of many Marylanders and bringing Maryland in line with federal standards and internationally-recognized best practices. As a nursing student, I am learning more about the many barriers to quality healthcare experienced by marginalized populations and how bills like the Trans Health Equity Act help to address them. It is essential that lower income patients access necessary preventative and priority medical care.

Maryland and its residents will save on expensive care of future physical and mental health complications. Because these Medicaid costs are largely reimbursed by the federal government, the budget cost is minimal and, as is the case for many forms of preventative and priority healthcare, the short-term costs are eclipsed by the long-term savings. New York, Massachusetts, Virginia, and numerous other states have taken this step, helping to achieve a higher level of health equity in their state. According to a 2020 study from the Center for American Progress, 51% of transgender individuals have postponed or avoided medical care due to cost. Maryland can and should join other states in ensuring access to this essential, lifesaving care for as many of our residents as possible.

Comprehensive gender-affirming care has a thorough basis in research and is supported by myriad medical associations, including the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics. Access to gender-affirming care has enabled me to personally thrive, achieving a 4.0 GPA at Maryland's top-rated community college and acceptance into its nationally-renowned nursing program. I respectfully ask that the HGO committee return a favorable report on HB283 and help other transgender Marylanders thrive as I have.

Thank you,
Lily Amara Pastor