

My name is Cameron LaFortune, I am a resident of Baltimore County, and I am in support of HB283.

I've been blessed in my life to know and remain in contact with a disproportionate number of trans people. I believe the average number of trans people is about 5% of the population, whereas I would say about a quarter of the people I have kept close ties with are trans. I call this a blessing because trans people are some of the most courageous, dependable, creative, and caring people out there. Because they have to be.

For people like me it can be difficult to understand the pressures that come with being trans. I desperately want to emphasize, these pressures are not innate to the trans experience, but come from living in a society that does not value the lives of trans people the way it values the lives of cis people.

I have a close friend who is a trans woman. She has worked for decades in a field that she planned to remain in for most of her life. She moved away from her home, her friends, her family, to live here in Maryland because she trusted me to not abandon her. And as she has worked here, I have watched as year by year the efforts I took to improve her happiness and quality of life have changed her mood. She has gone from sleeping on my couch because she didn't have another safe place to go to helping me save enough money to own my first home. I've gotten to watch how having a stable place to live and someone who would insist she be treated with respect improved her mood. I've gotten to see how being able to express herself as she genuinely felt comfortable has made her more prone to laugh. And I've had to watch as her dream of working in the field she has enjoyed all her life has faded further and further out of sight.

She can't get the gender affirming care she needs in the career she has worked for over a decade. Transitioning and finding work, let alone work that will not harass her, will likely prove impossible. And even though the things I've done to give her stability and safety have made her happier, it is clear that her inability to secure access to healthcare has weighed more and more heavily on her and her decisions in recent years. And she's trapped now, trapped like a lot of trans people, where their healthcare is out of reach, or where accessing it means losing access to the work they were using to get healthcare in the first place. After working since she was in highschool, she's soon to quit the field. I expect for good. It's hard to work a job that doesn't even meet the first major need you have, and likely never will.

For her, Medicaid is the only realistic plan she has for getting gender affirming care in the next five years. I have to imagine there are many more trans people in worse situations who similarly have to place their hopes for healthcare on the state. It feels like the least we can do, to try to ensure they can live long enough for us to sort out the rest of the injustices they are forced to endure.

Trans people do not, by virtue of being trans, lead unhappy lives. It is confronting the burden of living while trans, a burden that has been built and heaped on them with the intent of crushing them under it, that makes trans people's lives difficult.