

Maryland General Assembly Senate Finance Committee,

I write to you as a 20-plus year resident of Maryland living in General Assembly District 9A. I have family and dear friends living in Ohio, Louisiana, North Carolina, Florida, Tennessee, Arizona and West Virginia amongst other states scattered across the country. I list these states in particular because these are states that have laws restricting access to gender affirming care¹ and women's health.² Many of these states restrict both.

Last year we saw Senate Bill 859 / House Bill 808 protect Women's Health providers from out of state liability. This fall we will be voting on the Maryland Right to Reproductive Freedom amendment. These were common sense bills to protect basic human rights. With these bills Maryland recognized the need to protect all people from attacks on their body autonomy coming from out of state restrictions on reproductive freedom and women's health.

Senate Bill 119 is no different. It provides necessary protections and enshrines in law that gender affirming care is life saving care. That it is necessary is something I have very personal experience with as a trans* woman who remained closeted for the first 40 years of my life due to outright hostility to transgender people. Care was historically restricted using aggressive gatekeeping and providers treated people like myself as mentally disordered, just as our gay and lesbian friends had been during most of the 20th century. Even now, there are significant movements in this country and elsewhere that see transgender people as sexual deviants and undesirables. This pressure kept me from acknowledging my identity. As I've come out to people, the refrain I've heard time and time again is "we had no idea." They had no idea because other than a handful of trusted friends I did everything in my power to ensure that no one could know.

For me, this meant not only not acknowledging or acting on my identity, but also not even looking into what supports existed and how that world was changing around me from the early-90's when I became truly cognizant of my gender identity through the 2000's up until the last few years. The fear of non-acceptance and the hate in the world around me was nearly fatal.

Others I know personally and love, even now, in some of these nearby states face some of these same barriers to support. Without protection, these people are vulnerable to the same tactics in use to prevent safe access to reproductive care—pursuing people who leave their home state to receive care. In the case of transgender youth, this may extend to pursuing supportive parents who only seek to help their children.

I would like to thank the sponsors of this bill, especially Senator Clarence Lam for bringing this bill forward, and I encourage the committee to report favorably on this bill.

Sincerely, Dinah (Legal Name: Rudy) Yukich

¹ See report from the Movement Advancement Project <https://www.mapresearch.org/file/MAP-2023-Spotlight-Medical-Bans-report.pdf>

² See Center for Reproductive Rights <https://reproductiverights.org/maps/abortion-laws-by-state/>