

Senate Bill 119
Legally Protected Health Care - Gender-Affirming Treatment
February 15, 2024
Support

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Emma Andrews. I am a resident of District 46 and I am submitting this testimony in support of SB119, Legally Protected Healthcare - Gender-Affirming Treatment, which would add gender-affirming care to the definition of legally protected healthcare in Maryland.

Gender-affirming care is recognized as medically necessary by every major medical association, including the American Medical Association, The American Psychiatric Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics. Eleven states and the District of Columbia have shielding laws that include gender-affirming care, and three more states have introduced bills to do so this year.

Last year, Governor Moore Signed an Executive Order shielding this care from out of state litigation; but, without legislation defining care as legally protected, it remains vulnerable and so do all who benefit from that care and those who provide such care.

This is a simple bill - It does not change the type of care one receives or who can provide that care, it simply protects the care that is currently available in Maryland. It shields consumers and providers from extradition for gender-affirming care provided and prevents Maryland agencies and law enforcement from assisting out-of-state investigations of gender-affirming care legally protected. It will also prohibit occupational boards from disciplining a licensed or certified person over out-of-state complaints for gender-affirming care.

I have benefitted from gender-affirming care for the last 9 years. It has had a profound and unequivocally positive impact on my life. It has brought light and hope into a life constantly colored by pain, self-loathing, suicidality, and desolate loneliness. In short, it helped me find and love the me that was meant to shine for the world to see. I'm certain I would not be here today if I had not managed to gain access to my gender-affirming care those 9 years ago. I am grateful that I live in a state that has worked to defend the lives of transgender people and affirm our existence. I was filled with tears and joy when the Trans Health Equity Act was passed and when Governor Moore signed the executive order shielding that care. But I see the landscape across the country, and I fear for our future, and I fear for transgender folks now and those yet to come.

Twenty-two states, including those neighboring us, have enacted or proposed bans on this life-saving care; with one state already filing a lawsuit across state lines to obtain patient information for those who sought care with the intent to seek criminal charges. Those who provide care under these bans risk losing their license, fines, and even prison sentences. This bill needs to pass so everyone who needs gender-affirming care can be certain that access to this vitally important care will remain attainable in Maryland and those who provide it remain safe to do so.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB119.