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TESTIMONY ON SB0119 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Legally Protected Health Care - Gender-Affirming Treatment

TO: Chair Pamela Beidle, Vice Chair Katherine Klausmeier, and members of the Finance Committee

FROM: Mara R. Greengrass, on behalf of Jews United for Justice

My name is Mara Greengrass and I am a resident of District 18. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Jews United for Justice in support of SB0119, Legally Protected Health Care - Gender-Affirming Treatment. JUFJ organizes over 6,000 Jewish Marylanders and allies from all over the state in support of social, racial, and economic justice.

Passage of the Reproductive Health Protection Act last year was a step toward protecting Marylanders and our right to medically necessary care. We hope you will extend that protection to our trans neighbors by including gender-affirming treatment as legally protected healthcare.

One of the fundamental principles of Judaism is *pikuach nefesh*, saving a life. We're not only *allowed* to disregard laws or traditions in service of saving even one life, the rabbis tell us we're *required* to do so. And this includes both physical and mental health.

Health care providers and researchers overwhelmingly agree that evidence-based treatments such as counseling, social transition, and hormones make a meaningful difference in trans lives. Conversely, research shows that rates of suicide and self-harm skyrocket when gender-affirming care is not available and accessible to trans individuals.

A doctor refusing to provide life-saving healthcare is not only cruel but deeply harmful to the mental health and well-being of patients. Furthermore, transphobic laws that ban people from seeking and receiving gender-affirming care are putting doctors at risk. Some doctors have even voiced their concerns about treating non-Maryland patients, for fear of being charged or having their license suspended by law enforcement and state agencies in states that have banned gender-affirming care. Doctors who continue to deny their patients gender-affirming care for fear their license might be revoked by treating out-of-state patients put gender-expansive, nonbinary, and transgender patients all across America at risk.

Passage of SB0119 will ensure health care providers won't lose their license or be arrested for helping their patients and state agencies won't reveal health information to out-of-state law enforcement. It will make it easier and safer to provide gender-affirming care. **We respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB0119.**