



Senate Bill 119 / House Bill 691 Legally Protected Health Care – Gender–Affirming Treatment Position: **FAV**

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Alexa Rodriguez. I am a Trans Care Navigator at a community health clinic and a member of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East, the largest healthcare workers union in the United States. Additionally, I'm the Director of Trans Latinx DMV. Our mission is to advocate for the Trans-Latinx community and strategize ways to improve our community's quality of life in DC, Maryland and Virginia. I, 1199SEIU, and Trans Latinx DMV all support SB119/HB691, and urge the Committee to issue a **favorable** report.

I'm a transgender woman and a care coordinator for gender affirming healthcare (GAC), so SB119/HB691 would protect me on multiple levels. As a Trans Care Navigator, I see a lot of people like me- people living with HIV, trans folks who are immigrants and many of them undocumented¹ – fleeing to Washington DC and Maryland to access gender affirming healthcare that is medically necessary but is under attack in the states they are coming from. I hear so many stories from trans refugees that break my heart.

As trans people, especially Black & Brown transgender women, we are often the victims of violence at the hands of people who hate us because we are transgender. When we are able to get GAC, we are less “noticeably trans” to people who seek to harm us. GAC enables us to move through the world more safely.

Maryland passed the Reproductive Health Protection Act last year to shield abortion care providers, so Maryland can keep the days of hazardous “back alley” abortions behind us. There is “back alley” GAC too, yet GAC providers currently aren't shielded like abortion care providers are. When some trans people can't access GAC, they may turn to the grey market for hormones and silicone injections without the supervision of medical professionals, which can be life threatening. If Maryland doesn't have the shield of SB119/HB691, we may lose GAC providers, forcing vulnerable transgender patients to take matters into their own hands.

SB119/HB691 is so important because it will protect medical providers of GAC and care navigators from penalties imposed by states that seek to criminalize transgender people and our healthcare. Without protections, GAC professionals are risking our livelihoods, and potentially risking jail time, to ensure that transgender people continue to have healthcare. In the trans community in El Salvador, we have a saying “no somos peligrosas, estamos en peligro,” meaning, “we are not dangerous, we are in danger.” I feel it is appropriate to apply that saying here. GAC providers and navigators are not dangerous, we are in danger. Trans people and the those who care for us need the shield this bill will provide. Our lives are on the line. Vote YES on SB119/HB691.

In Unity,

Alexa Rodriguez
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¹ I am a United States citizen.