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SUPPORT – SB 119

Legally Protected Health Care - Gender-Affirming Treatment
House Health and Government Operations Committee
March 20, 2024

Chair Peña-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill 119, on behalf of Disability Rights Maryland (DRM). Disability Rights Maryland is the designated Protection & Advocacy agency in Maryland, mandated to advance the civil rights of people with disabilities.

This bill will provide parity for gender-affirming healthcare providers and patients by providing the same legal protections that currently exist for reproductive healthcare in Maryland. The United States has seen escalating waves of attacks that politicize medically necessary healthcare. Over twenty states have now passed laws that interfere with the delivery of both reproductive and gender-affirming care.¹ Maryland acted to protect the wellbeing of reproductive healthcare providers and patients, and similar action is now necessary to prevent other states from interfering with Maryland's healthcare system by punishing those who access and deliver gender-affirming healthcare.

DRM applauds this Committee's history of valuing medical best practices when it issued a favorable report on the Trans Health Equity Act, 2023 HB283. SB119 will build upon the Committee's work to protect communities with disparate health burdens. 39% of transgender individuals have one or more disabilities, compared to just 15% of the general population.² By including gender-affirming care in the definition of legally protected healthcare, Maryland will improve the wellbeing of this marginalized community, as well as protect the front-line workers delivering healthcare in Maryland.

DRM urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB119. For further information, please contact Sam Williamson, Staff Attorney, at 410-727-6352 or samw@disabilityrightsmd.org.

¹ Compare "Is Abortion Still Accessible in My State Now That Roe v. Wade Was Overturned?" Planned Parenthood, <https://www.plannedparenthoodaction.org/abortion-access-tool/US>, with "Map: Attacks on Gender Affirming Care by State," Human Rights Campaign, <https://www.hrc.org/resources/attacks-on-gender-affirming-care-by-state-map>.

² "Health Disparities at the Intersection of Disability and Gender Identity: A Framework and Literature Review," Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (July 2018) at 2, <https://dredf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Health-Disparities-at-the-Intersection-of-Disability-and-Gender-Identity.pdf>.