



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support of SB 119 Legally Protected Health Care - Gender-Affirming Treatment

TO: Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk, Chair, and
Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee and
Luke Clippinger, Chair and Members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Kari Alperovitz-Bichell, MD, MPH
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland Health Care

DATE: March 20, 2024

I am Kari Alperovitz-Bichell, MD representing myself, both as a physician, and as a person of faith speaking on behalf of the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland.

We urge you to support SB 119- Legally Protected Health Care - Gender-Affirming Treatment which would protect medical providers, patients, and their support networks from out-of-state investigations and prosecutions related to gender affirming care. Last year the legislature provided these protections to providers of reproductive health care (including abortion) – and we strongly applaud that legislation. However, gender affirming treatment was left out of last year’s legislation. This needs to be addressed now.

As a primary care physician, I have provided both gender affirming treatment and reproductive health care in my practice. On one hand, I am relieved that we now have the protections afforded in last year’s legislation. However, I am quite alarmed that doctors in Seattle, WA, are already being targeted by out-of-state investigators.¹ Doctors ought to be able to focus on providing excellent treatment for every patient. Not worry about whether a patient might have “snuck in” from some other state or that their treatment will put them both at risk for prosecution or financial ruin.

I have seen first hand how gender affirming care can be lifesaving. Untreated patients can be extremely depressed and suffer a high suicide rate. Treatment can alleviate that suffering to an immense degree. Without the protection of shielding laws, I am terrified that the perceived threats from other states could have a chilling effect on provision of needed gender affirming health care services to patients.

But, more fundamentally for me and my fellow Unitarian Universalists, I am called by the first principle of my faith to affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every human being. Our faith recognizes a universal human need for safe and dignified health care, a need that does not stop at state lines.

Therefore, we at UULM-MD urge you to vote yes on SB 119, to include gender affirming care as “legally protected healthcare” in Maryland.

Kari Alperovitz-Bichell, MD, MPH

1. https://www.texastribune.org/2023/12/21/texas-attorney-general-trans-seattle-childrens/?utm_campaign=trib-social-buttons&utm_source=copy&utm_medium=social

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2023/12/23/texas-seeks-residents-gender-care-records-from-seattle-childrens/72021017007/>

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