



February 21, 2024

**House Health and Government Operations Committee  
TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION**

*HB 722 - Health – Minors – Gender and Sex Transition Procedures*

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) is a nonprofit organization that serves as the local behavioral health authority (LBHA) for Baltimore City. BHSB works to increase access to a full range of quality behavioral health (mental health and substance use) services and advocates for innovative approaches to prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery for individuals, families, and communities. Baltimore City represents nearly 35 percent of the public behavioral health system in Maryland, serving over 100,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as “behavioral health”) annually.

**Behavioral Health System Baltimore opposes HB 722 - Health – Minors – Gender and Sex Transition Procedures.** This bill would prevent gender diverse youth from accessing needed gender-affirming treatment. The prohibition in this bill would harm the mental health of vulnerable youth and we urge an unfavorable report.

Young people who are transgender, non-binary, or otherwise gender diverse face significant challenges. These youth often experience discrimination, decreased social support, and rejection from their families. Bullying at school and misunderstandings from other authority figures are common. These difficult experiences can contribute to poor mental health, depression, and suicidal thoughts.

Gender affirming care is shown to improve the short-term and long-term mental health and well being of these young people. Support from health care professionals can help these youth have confidence in navigating their gender identity and their relationships with others. Gender affirming care decrease depression and suicidality significantly and increase well-being which is especially important for populations such as transgender youth who have high rates of self-harm.<sup>1</sup>

Supporting good mental health and well being in gender diverse young people is critical. HB 722 would prevent needed health care and harm the mental health of vulnerable young people. **BHSB urges the House Health and Government Operations Committee to oppose HB 722.**

***For more information, please contact BHSB Policy Director Dan Rabbitt at 443-401-6142***

**References:**

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<sup>1</sup> Tordoff DM, Wanta JW, Collin A, Stepney C, Inwards-Breland DJ, Ahrens K. “Mental Health Outcomes in Transgender and Nonbinary Youths Receiving Gender-Affirming Care.” *JAMA Network Open*. 2022 Feb 1;5(2). Available at <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35212746/>.