



LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

Bill: **SB119 Gender Affirming Care**

Organization: PFLAG Salisbury Inc., PO Box 5107, Salisbury Maryland 21802

Submitted by: Nicole Hollywood, Board Member

Position: **FAVORABLE**

SALISBURY PFLAG SUPPORTS GENDER AFFIRMING CARE

This testimony is being submitted in favor of SB119 on behalf of PFLAG Salisbury, the Salisbury, Maryland Chapter of PFLAG National, the nation's first and largest national organization dedicated to supporting, educating, and advocating for LGBTQIA+ people and their families.

LGBTQIA+ people experience a number of health disparities. They are at higher risk of certain conditions, have significantly less access to health care, and have worse health outcomes. These disparities come from a combination of homophobia and transphobia, a lack of access to affirming healthcare, misinformation, and inequities in our health care system.

Gender-affirming care, as defined by the World Health Organization, encompasses a range of social, psychological, behavioral, and medical interventions “designed to support and affirm an individual’s gender identity” when it conflicts with the gender they were assigned at birth. The interventions help transgender and gender non-conforming individuals align various aspects of their lives — emotional, interpersonal, and biological — with their gender identity. Gender-affirming care consists of an array of services that may include medical, surgical, mental health, and non-medical services for transgender and nonbinary people.

Every single major medical organization, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association and the American Psychiatric Association, supports the provision of age-appropriate, gender-affirming care for transgender and non-binary people. These doctors represent over 1.3 million doctors in the United States.

A 2023 study that we conducted on the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland found dissatisfaction when it came to general access to healthcare, gender affirming care, mental health services, and reproductive care. More specifically, a consistent theme running throughout the results was the lack of sufficient medical care for transgender and gender non-conforming individuals.

The research is clear and a number of references to reputable studies are included as an appendix to this testimony. Overwhelmingly, gender-affirming healthcare practices have been shown in the research to result in lower rates of mental health issues, healthier self-esteem, and improvement in individual's

overall quality of life. It is also important to note that to date, no reputable studies have reported findings that suggest GAC increases negative mental or physical health outcomes.

Gender-affirming care has always existed and isn't a new phenomenon." SB119/HB691 would amend the definition of "legally protected health care" to include certain gender-affirming treatment. These protections include:

- Shielding consumers, providers, and support individuals from extradition for gender-affirming care provided in Maryland
- Prohibiting Maryland agencies and law enforcement from assisting with out-of-state investigations of gender-affirming care legally protected in Maryland
- Prohibiting occupational boards from disciplining a licensed or certified individual over out-of-state complaints for gender-affirming care

SB119/HB691 will help address inequities in Maryland's current healthcare system that will greatly enhance the quality of life of thousands of transgender Marylanders. Because of this, we recommend a FAVORABLE report in committee.

APPENDIX

Aldridge Z, Patel S, Guo B, et al. Long-term effect of gender-affirming hormone treatment on depression and anxiety symptoms in transgender people: A prospective cohort study. *Andrology*. 2021; 9: 1808–1816. doi.org/10.1111/andr.12884

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Buzzetto-Hollywood, N. (2023). Delmarva LGBTQIA+ climate survey results. PFLAG Salisbury. <http://www.salisburypflag.com/needs-assessment.html>

Green, A. E., DeChants, J. P., Price, M. N., and Davis, C. K. (2021). Association of Gender-Affirming Hormone Therapy With Depression, Thoughts of Suicide, and Attempted Suicide Among Transgender and Nonbinary Youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 70(4). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2021.10.036>

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