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Mara R. Greengrass  
Rockville, MD 20852



**TESTIMONY ON SBI 19 - POSITION: FAVORABLE**  
**Legally Protected Health Care - Gender-Affirming Treatment**

**TO:** Chair Peña-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee

**FROM:** Mara R. Greengrass, on behalf of Jews United for Justice

**My name is Mara Greengrass and I am a resident of District 18. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Jews United for Justice in support of SBI 19, Legally Protected Health Care - Gender-Affirming Treatment. JUFJ organizes over 6,000 Jewish Marylanders and allies from all over the state in support of social, racial, and economic justice.**

Passage of the Reproductive Health Protection Act last year was a step toward protecting Marylanders and our right to medically necessary care. We hope you will extend that protection to our trans neighbors by including gender-affirming treatment as legally protected healthcare, as well.

One of the fundamental principles of Judaism is *pikuach nefesh*, saving a life. Rabbis tell us that we are not only *allowed* to disregard laws or traditions in service of saving even one life but that we are *required* to do so. Saving a life requires us to preserve and protect both physical and mental health.

Healthcare providers and researchers overwhelmingly agree that evidence-based treatments such as counseling, social transition, and medical interventions like puberty blockers and hormones make a meaningful difference in saving trans lives. Conversely, research shows that rates of suicide and self-harm skyrocket when gender-affirming care is not available and accessible to trans individuals.

A doctor refusing to provide life-saving healthcare is not only cruel but deeply harmful to the mental health and well-being of patients. Furthermore, transphobic laws that ban people from seeking and receiving gender-affirming care are putting doctors at risk. Some doctors have even voiced their concerns about treating non-Maryland patients, for fear of being charged or having their license suspended by law enforcement and state agencies in states that have banned

gender-affirming care. Doctors who continue to deny their patients gender-affirming care for fear their license might be revoked by treating out-of-state patients put gender-expansive, non-binary, and transgender patients all across America at risk.

SBI 19 is a simple and critical technical fix that will go a long way in protecting the gender-affirming care that is already legal and being provided in Maryland. The legislation will ensure health care providers won't lose their license or be arrested for helping their patients and state agencies won't reveal health information to out-of-state law enforcement. It will make it easier and safer to provide gender-affirming care in Maryland, particularly to patients from out of state. **On behalf of Jews United for Justice, I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SBI 19.**