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February 11, 2025

The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
240 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Oppose – HB 1399: Health Occupations - Cross-Sex Hormone Therapy for Minors - Prohibition (Protect the Kids Act)

Dear Chairwoman Pena-Melnyk and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strive through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS and WPS represent over 1100 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

We are writing to express our opposition to the passage of House Bill 1399 entitled, "Health Occupations - Cross-Sex Hormone Therapy for Minors - Prohibition (Protect the Kids Act)." Passage of this bill would criminalize the prescribing of hormones and puberty-blocking agents to transgender youth. A health care professional found guilty of violation of this section would be subject to up to lifetime imprisonment.

Psychiatrists are often part of the treatment team for transgender youth. The onset of puberty for these individuals frequently brings significant distress, which may lead to increased anxiety, depression, interpersonal conflicts, suicidal ideation, and self-harm.

The American Medical Association cited a recent study that showed that transgender adults who sought and received puberty-delaying medication as adolescents had a lower likelihood of lifetime suicidal ideation compared to those who wanted puberty-delaying hormone treatment but did not receive it. Nine in ten transgender individuals who wanted but did not receive puberty-delaying treatment reported having suicidal thoughts during their lifetime. Access to gender-affirming care is associated with a significant reduction in suicide attempts, decreased rates of depression and anxiety, decreased substance abuse, improved HIV medication adherence, and reduced use of self-prescribed hormones (i.e. hormones obtained over the internet). The treatment we provide should be evidence-based.

The provision of comprehensive treatment, which may involve hormonal and puberty-delaying medication, allows the youth to address their emotional needs during their adolescence. The decision should be made by the youth, the youth's parents, and the treatment team. Our position is consistent with the positions of the American Medical Association, American Psychiatric Association, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the Pediatric Endocrine Society.

We therefore ask for an unfavorable report of HB 1399. If you have any questions regarding this testimony, please contact Lisa Harris Jones at lisa.jones@mdlobbyist.com.

Respectfully submitted,
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society
Legislative Action Committee