



**Maryland Commission
on LGBTQIA+ Affairs**

Bill Title: Health - Maryland Helping Everyone Afford Life-Saving Treatments and Health Care (HEALTH) Fund and Income Tax Checkoff

Bill Number(s): [HB1059](#)

Position: FAVORABLE

Date: February 25, 2025

Submitted by: Jeremy Browning, Director of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

To:

House Health and Government Operations Committee

The Hon. Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair
The Hon. Bonnie Cullison, Vice Chair

Testimony on behalf of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs:

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs, created by the Maryland General Assembly, works to serve LGBTQIA+ Marylanders by galvanizing community voices, researching and addressing challenges, and advocating for policies that advance equity and inclusion. The Commission envisions a Maryland where all LGBTQIA+ people can live full and authentic lives. As a vital resource, the Commission collaborates with public officials, agencies, and community partners to ensure the rights and dignity of LGBTQIA+ Marylanders are protected and respected.

The Commission is in strong support of House Bill 1059, which establishes the Maryland Helping Everyone Afford Life-Saving Treatments and Health Care (HEALTH) Fund to provide financial assistance to Maryland Medical Assistance Program enrollees and insured individuals for healthcare services restricted by federal policies. One of the most persistent barriers to LGBTQIA+ health equity is the financial burden of accessing necessary care. The Maryland Medical Assistance Program is required to provide medically necessary gender-affirming care in a nondiscriminatory manner as mandated by the 2023 Trans Health Equity Act (THEA).

Federal funding restrictions may limit coverage for those in the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and it is imperative that the State of Maryland does everything in its power to ensure some of our most vulnerable communities continue to receive this lifesaving care. These cuts would disproportionately affect transgender individuals seeking gender-affirming care, people living with HIV who rely on specialized treatment, and LGBTQIA+ individuals seeking reproductive healthcare.

Additionally, LGBTQIA+ individuals, particularly Black and Brown transgender women and gay and bisexual men, continue to face disparities in HIV treatment access. Federal funding restrictions, such as the Hyde Amendment's impact on Ryan White Program services, limit available resources. HB 1059 ensures that Maryland can provide state-level assistance for life-saving medications and preventive treatments, such as PrEP.

The creation of a special, nonlapsing HEALTH Fund ensures that Maryland remains a leader in proactive, inclusive healthcare policy. By allowing taxpayers to voluntarily contribute through an income tax checkoff system, HB 1059 provides a sustainable funding mechanism to supplement state resources without increasing financial burdens on the state budget.

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs strongly urges a favorable report on HB 1059 to ensure that Marylanders facing healthcare access barriers, especially those in the LGBTQIA+ community, can receive the care they need and deserve.