

I was 11 when I first knew I was Transgender, and 12 the first time I knew I needed that my body was changing in ways that were causing me pain. I shared my gender dysphoria with my parents and, with them, explored the options available to me, including medical interventions.

I received gender affirming care as a minor while living in Montgomery County, Maryland, this including both hormone treatment and top surgery under the age of 18. Me and my parents worked with professionals in pediatric endocrinology, mental health and a plastic surgeon skilled in gender-affirming care over the course of years to ensure that this was the right course of treatment for me.

I began my medical transition as soon as it was available to me at the age of 16. I cannot stress enough that a delay in this treatment would have done irreparable harm to me. While two years may not seem like a lot I was already missing out on key experiences during my formative years. Prior to transitioning I was depressed, trapped in a body that I was disconnected from and that did not reflect who I truly was. I was unable to focus on school, my family or my friends because of the mental toll dysphoria took on my mind.

It is only and exclusively because of my access to gender affirming medical care that I was able to graduate high school as my school's valedictorian and go on to receive a full ride to an R1 research university where I graduated at the top of my class with a degree in public health. I am currently pursuing my master's degree in Health Policy while working in public service. I work to improve the health of my community every day, a feat that is only possible because of the medical care I received in high school.

I am deeply grateful that I was born in Montgomery County, where I was able to access medical care that me, my parents and my doctors knew was best for me. Without gender affirming care I would not be where I am today. A delay in my treatment would have meant that I may not have been able to graduate high school, attend college or become the adult that I am today.

I want to thank the many legislators on the committee who have protected gender affirming care for trans children and teen. I ask that legislators who oppose gender affirming care ask themselves - Why do you think you know me better than I, my parents, and my doctors? Are you truly speaking from knowledge or simply from fear? I ask that you reconsider your position. Trust young people, parents, professionals, don't let your fears get in their way of allowing trans people to grow into the people we were always meant to be.