



The Autistic People of Color Fund

16 February 2026

Health Committee
Maryland State House of Delegates

Dear Committee Members:

I am a transgender and autistic resident of Baltimore County writing in **strong opposition** to HB-679, Health Occupations – Cross-Sex Hormone Therapy for Minors. I have worked in disability advocacy, with a focus on autism and developmental disabilities, for nearly twenty years, and am now a public policy expert, lawyer, and college professor at Georgetown University. I am also founding executive director of The Autistic People of Color Fund, a national organization led by autistic and transgender people of color, and a board member of the Disability Rights Bar Association, which represents attorneys practicing disability civil rights law. For informational purposes only, I am a Commissioner on the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs as well as an appointee to the Department of Disability's Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs; however, I provide this testimony in my personal capacity and not on behalf of the Commission or the Department of Disabilities.

Every transgender person's journey is unique and individual. Like many, I knew as young as only four years old that I did not fit into the category of "girl." I was not a tomboy, a jock, or a reactionary who hated the color pink and stories about pretty princesses. I just knew that I was not a girl, just as I also knew that I was not a boy. I wanted to grow up to wear gorgeous ball gowns and dashing tuxedos and to avoid both clothes shopping (stereotyped as feminine) and sports (stereotyped as masculine) so I could read books. Interesting that a boy who reads too many books might be seen as effeminate and a girl who reads too many books might be seen as too aloof and insufficiently feminine.

I did not have access to gender affirming care – hormone replacement therapy or otherwise – when I was a child. Instead, I had to watch with growing horror as my body grew parts and gained functions that made me feel like a monstrous alien instead of myself. Even worse, I was consistently described as a girl and later, as a woman, words that felt like wearing a scratchy sweater that's too tight and also maybe damp. (This is not a word one wishes to apply to clothing.)

As an adult, I know who I am and I am proud and grateful to have found communities with people like me, whose experiences resonate with my own. I have come out as nonbinary and transmasculine, meaning that my gender tends a bit toward the masculine range of the spectrum, but exists outside both womanhood and manhood. I am still not a tomboy, nor am I confused, a repressed lesbian, a self-hating woman, or a victim of predatory brainwashing and manipulation. I was diagnosed as autistic when I was thirteen years old, and found that even then, gender stereotypes about autism in girls vs. boys did not apply to me; my autistic traits did not map easily onto such gendered profiles.

Since then, I have mentored, taught, advocated for, and worked with hundreds of other autistic and transgender people, all of whom know who they are. Some choose, like me, to seek gender affirming care; others choose to transition socially but not medically. Disabled advocates have long held that people with disabilities should be presumed competent and able to make choices, have preferences, and exercise autonomy, just like nondisabled people. The presence of a



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developmental disability does not mean that a child is incapable of understanding themselves. To the contrary, my own experience of autism meant that I was already seen as an outsider, strange, weird, and freakish, so I felt little pressure to conform to gender expectations. I would never have fit in with any of the stereotyped gender presentations that proliferated in my childhood – girly girl, preppy, emo, goth, jock, tomboy, burnout, or any other. I was not a different, manic pixie dream girl, rebellious kind of girl. I was not a woman at all.

I am fortunate to have access to medical providers of my choosing as an adult. I wish that I had access to such care when I was younger, and I hope that the next generations will have the care, resources, and tools available to help them live authentically and well. The evidence is clear – every major medical association, internationally and domestically, has repeatedly come down on the side of science and human dignity. Gender affirming care, including for transgender children and youth, is medically necessary treatment. It is also lifesaving.

Contrary to the arguments posed by proponents of this bill, there is absolutely no evidence that autistic children and youth are facing pressure to pursue otherwise unwanted gender transition. If anything, nearly every autistic transgender person that I know has shared the opposite. Whether as youth or adults, we have almost universally faced resistance and opposition to our desire to transition, along with pressure to remain in bodies that cause severe distress recognized as a diagnosable disability. As an adult, I was required to provide two letters from mental health professionals who have seen me for several years combined, in order to receive approval from both my health insurance plan and the surgeon providing my gender confirmation procedures. Those professionals were required to conduct a detailed assessment of my mental state, desire to transition, and readiness for surgery and post-surgical recovery before they could write letters affirming that I could receive the care that I need. When I shared the news with family members, I faced further resistance, as they expressed concern about undergoing permanent and invasive medical procedures. These experiences are the very opposite of undue pressure to undergo gender transition and identify as a different gender.

My work, across all domains, focuses on addressing systems and policies that enable harm and further injustice, and transforming those systems to enable care, dignity, and abundance for all, including those who are most marginalized in our society. Let's refocus on the work of enabling quality, affordable, and accessible health care for all, instead of trying to deprive a marginalized population of access to medically necessary care. I urge you to vote against HB-679.

Sincerely,

Ly Xīnzhèn M. Zhǎngsūn Brown, J.D.
Executive Director
The Autistic People of Color Fund

Resident of District 7A (Baltimore County)