



The Honorable Chair
Delegate Heather Bagnall
Health Committee
240 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: OPPOSITION of House Bill 0679
Health Occupations - Cross-Sex Hormone Therapy for Minors**

Dear Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, and esteemed members of the Health Committee,

The Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition writes in **strong opposition to House Bill 0679** Health Occupations - Cross-Sex Hormone Therapy for Minors. This bill would prohibit evidence-based, medically necessary care recognized and recommended by every major medical association in the United States. Gender-affirming hormone therapy for youth is established, regulated medical care. Removing access does not eliminate gender dysphoria - it removes safe treatment and increases the risk of serious harm, including depression, suicide, and unsafe self-medication.^{1,2} HB0679 would deny Maryland youth access to medically necessary care and reject decades worth of scientific evidence and clinical guidelines.

The Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition is a certified Syringe Service Program and Overdose Response Program serving community members across the state. We provide harm reduction services, including gender-affirming care and resources for transgender and nonbinary Marylanders. Our participants consistently report that gender-affirming care stabilizes their mental health, safety, and long-term wellbeing. However, access is already limited by cost, transportation barriers, anti-trans harassment, disability, interpersonal violence, and healthcare discrimination. Many of our participants have experienced homelessness, employment discrimination, violence, and systemic barriers to care. When care is inaccessible, participants report taking greater risks to survive and access treatment, including turning to unregulated sources, engaging in survival economies, and becoming more isolated and vulnerable to exploitation. These are predictable and preventable harms caused by barriers to healthcare access.

Harm Reduction recognizes that withholding care increases risk and exacerbates harm. Gender-affirming hormone therapy reduces suicide risk, improves mental health, prevents unsafe self-medication, protects long-term health, and keeps young people engaged in medical care.^{1,2} When care is denied, young people and their families are left with fewer safe options, not more protection.

HB0679 would directly harm Maryland youth and families who are seeking appropriate medical care under the guidance of licensed professionals. Medical decisions should be made between patients, families, and qualified medical professionals, not by politicians. Maryland has long been a leader in public health and evidence-based policy. HB0679 would reverse that progress and deny young people access to care that protects their health, safety, and future.

For these reasons and many more, **we respectfully urge the Health Committee to give House Bill 0679 an unfavorable report.**

For more information about this position, please contact Darci Curwen-Garber, BHRC Policy Manager, at darci@baltimoreharmreduction.org.

Sincerely,

The Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition (BHRC)

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1. Tordoff DM, Wanta JW, Collin A, Stepney C, Inwards-Breland DJ, Ahrens K. *Mental Health Outcomes in Transgender and Nonbinary Youths Receiving Gender-Affirming Care*. JAMA Network Open. 2022;5(2):e220978. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.0978.
2. Chen D, et al. *Psychosocial Functioning in Transgender Youth after 2 Years of Hormones*. New England Journal of Medicine. 2023.