

SHORE PRIDE ALLIANCE LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

Bill: **HB679 Gender Affirming Care**

Organization: Shore Pride Alliance., PO Box 5107, Salisbury Maryland 21802

Submitted by: Nicole Hollywood, Board Member

Position: **UNFAVORABLE**

This testimony is being submitted in OPPOSITION to HB679 on behalf of on behalf of Shore Pride Alliance, formerly PFLAG Salisbury, an organization dedicated to supporting, educating, and advocating for LGBTQIA+ people and their families.

Gender-affirming care, as defined by the World Health Organization, encompasses a range of social, psychological, behavioral, and medical interventions “designed to support and affirm an individual’s gender identity”. The interventions help individuals of all ages align various aspects of their lives — emotional, interpersonal, and biological — with their gender identity.

Every single major medical organization, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association and the American Psychiatric Association, supports the provision of age-appropriate, gender-affirming care for transgender and non-binary people. These doctors represent over 1.3 million doctors in the United States.

Empirical research consistently finds that gender-affirming healthcare practices for youth result in lower rates of mental health issues, healthier self-esteem, and improved individual's overall quality of life (Achille, et al., 2020; Aldridge, et al., 2030; Allen, et al., 2019; Bhatt, et al., 2022; Caprini, et al., 2023; Chen, et al., 2023; De Vries, et al., 2014; Grannis, et al., Van der Miesen, et al., 2020).

To date, and following the conduction of numerous comprehensive literature reviews, **no reputable studies have reported findings that suggest GAC increases negative mental or physical health outcomes** (Restar, 2023).

Further, **GAC for youth is highly individualized, rarely involves surgery for minors, and often includes reversible options like puberty blockers to provide time for exploration, which is associated with better long-term mental health outcomes** (Tordoff, et al., 2022). Finally, **GAC for transgender youth is safe, with side effects similar to general medical interventions** (Mullins, et al., 2021; Olsen, et al, 2018).

Budge et al. (2024) explains that **gender affirming care for minors is evidence based, focused on patient well-being, and supported by continuity of care from providers who make adjustments as needed** noting that "We cannot allow cherry-picked data or unsound research methodologies to drive clinical care, agency policies, or legislation, to the detriment of health equity for TGD youth."

Gender-affirming care has always existed and isn't a new phenomenon." HB679 would cause very real harm to Maryland youth and their families and accordingly we recommend an UNFAVORABLE report in committee.

APPENDIX

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