

Testimony in Favor with Amendments

House Bill 679

Health Occupations Cross Sex Hormone Therapy for Minors

Good afternoon Chair and members of the Committee.

My name is The Honorable Dr Cashenna A Cross. I am a United States Air Force veteran, a municipal leader, and a lifelong advocate for children, families, and community wellbeing. My professional life has been centered on protecting young people while ensuring that public policy reflects both compassion and accountability.

I offer testimony in Favor with Amendments.

As a former military instructor who trained more than six thousand United States and international officers, I have spent decades working at the intersection of leadership, ethics, and human development. I have also worked extensively in community initiatives addressing youth vulnerability, mental health stability, and family resilience. From that perspective, I believe this legislation raises important concerns regarding the protection of minors, but it also presents areas that require careful refinement to avoid unintended harm.

The stated goal of protecting minors deserves serious consideration. Young people facing complex identity and mental health challenges require thoughtful guidance, strong parental engagement, and comprehensive psychological support. Public policy must ensure that irreversible medical decisions are approached with caution and grounded in long term wellbeing.

However, several provisions of the bill create significant concern.

First, the felony penalty carrying potential life imprisonment for licensed medical professionals is disproportionate and risks discouraging physicians from providing lawful mental health care or even engaging in necessary clinical conversations. Criminal penalties of this magnitude should be reserved for intentional harm, not areas of evolving medical practice.

Second, the bill does not clearly distinguish between experimental intervention and medically supervised care supported by established review processes. Without clearer definitions, practitioners and families may face confusion, fear, and reduced access to counseling and supportive services.

Third, the legislation does not sufficiently address the need for expanded mental health resources. If restrictions are imposed, the State must simultaneously invest in counseling, family education, trauma informed care, and long term behavioral health support so that minors are not left without pathways to care.

For these reasons, I respectfully recommend the following amendments:

One, replace the felony life sentence provision with proportionate administrative and professional disciplinary measures aligned with existing medical licensing standards.

Two, clarify statutory definitions to ensure that psychological counseling, evaluation, and non irreversible treatment options remain protected and accessible.

Three, require documented parental involvement and multidisciplinary medical review prior to any restricted intervention, ensuring accountability without criminalizing providers acting in good faith.

Four, include a parallel investment requirement directing the Department to expand youth mental health services and family support programs.

Maryland has an obligation to protect children while also maintaining trust between families and medical professionals. Balanced legislation should safeguard minors, respect parental responsibility, and avoid policies that create fear driven gaps in care.

I respectfully urge the Committee to adopt a Favorable Report with Amendments so that this bill advances protection without producing unintended consequences.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honorable Dr Cashenna A Cross

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