

Date: March 29, 2017
To: House Committee on Health Care
From: Eric Landon
Re: Support for HB 3086

I was first diagnosed with HIV/AIDS over thirty years ago. In the spring of 1985 my doctor told me there were no medications or treatments available. I was told I had 6-8 months to live, and that I should get my affairs in order. Thankfully, my doctor was mistaken. Although I was hospitalized several times in the early 90's, in 1996 a promising new treatment emerged that relieved many of my symptoms and allowed me to leave my apartment for the first time in a year. Truly, I am one of the fortunate ones.

Sadly, these new treatments came at a cost. Some, including bone degeneration and increased risk of heart disease have been borne in private, without obvious symptoms, and have been treated with hip replacements and heart surgery. However, like other long term HIV/AIDS survivors, I have experienced teeth loss and lipodystrophy, which has included facial and body wasting and severe fat accumulation; conditions that are harder to hide from friends, family, and co-workers. While I am forever grateful for those early treatments that have kept me alive, we HIV/AIDS survivors have endured many years with devastating physical deformities that ravage our bodies, and increase the stigma associated with our community.

Fortunately for me, I fulfilled a lifelong dream of relocating to Paris upon receiving my diagnosis, and was treated by a medical system that recognized the severe mental impact these health conditions have on a person's ability to work, and function as a contributing member of the community. I benefited from facial fillers that allowed me to go back to work, and eventually to enroll in a MBA program.

Today I do not have medical coverage for procedures that many insurers consider "cosmetic". I am not a wealthy person, and, like many Oregonians, I don't have thousands of dollars in savings for procedures to address my lipodystrophy. Overtime, my arms and legs will become spindles. My fat redistribution wreaks havoc on my body, transforming it into something unrecognizable. My face will become skeletal, and soon the daily stigma will push me into isolation.

I came here today to share my story with you. I came here to ask for your help on behalf of Oregonians living with lipodystrophy today. I strongly urge you to pass this bill. Thank you.