

TO: Senate Workforce Committee
FROM: Kaden Merrill
DATE: May 15, 2017
RE: Vote YES on HB 3060A

Chair Hovey and Members of Committee:

My name is Kaden Merrill, and I ask for your support of HB 3060A, Preventing Discrimination Through Public Contracting. This bill will help limit discrimination against transgender Oregonians like me and will send a clear message that doing business with the state means abiding by our values of nondiscrimination

While Oregon is on the forefront of LGBTQ equality nationally, transgender Oregonians remain among our most vulnerable and misunderstood community members, particularly when it comes to accessing health care and employment.

I am one of many transgender Oregonians who has been denied health care because of my gender identity. I am fortunate to have health insurance through my mother's employer. I recognize I am still at risk for cervical cancer, which means I need to get annual Pap smear screenings. Despite my repeated requests, my doctor told me I didn't need cervical cancer screenings, contrary to standards of care for a person my age. I continued to ask. After three years, my doctor acknowledged she did not know how to treat me and recommended I find another doctor.

I switched doctors and finally received a Pap screening. It came back positive for pre-cancerous cells. To prevent the spread of cancer, my physician recommended a hysterectomy, but our insurance provider denied treatment.

Unfortunately, because my mother's insurance was based out of state, it is not regulated directly by the Oregon insurance regulators' guidelines that insurers cannot deny coverage based on a person's gender identity.

Luckily in January, my mother changed jobs and I am currently working with my new health insurance provider to approve the procedure so the pre-cancerous cells can be removed. However, life-saving care should not depend on which carrier you have.

HB 3060A sends a clear message that if you do business with the State of Oregon, and provide health benefits, we expect you to provide fair and equal treatment to all your employees and their dependents and not deny coverage based on gender identity.

Thank you for the opportunity to support HB 3060A, which will prevent discrimination through public contracting.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my story.

Kaden Merrill
Hillsboro, Oregon