

Vote Yes on HB 2002

Dear Chair Nosse and members of House Behavioral Health and Health Care Committee,

For the record, my name is Callie Mae Riley, my pronouns are she & her, and I am a resident of NE Portland in House District 45. I urge your support for HB 2002.

I want to applaud the drafters of this legislation for recognizing that struggles for bodily and reproductive autonomy are always and forever linked. We cannot talk about contraception, abortion, and trans health care as distinct issues, and I'm delighted that they are included together in this bill. While I support this bill in its entirety, I will be focusing my comments on the sections related to gender-affirming care.

I am a trans woman, and on an Aetna insurance plan which does not cover facial feminization surgeries (broadly called "FFS" among trans women). My insurer considers such procedures "cosmetic" and thus ineligible for coverage despite the World Professional Association of Transgender Health's most recent Standards of Care establishing facial surgeries as medically-necessary transition-related services¹. The effects that testosterone had on my face before I transitioned have caused me intense dysphoria and dysmorphia for my entire life, which has only grown with time. I am frankly desperate to get FFS to alleviate the alienation I feel when I look in the mirror. Unfortunately, I am unable to afford the cost of surgery out of pocket, and so without the provisions in HB 2002 requiring that FFS be covered by insurance carriers, this intense feeling of pain and discomfort about my face will continue.

Transition has literally saved my life. Before I came out, I was depressed, dissociated, timid, and drifting through life. I struggled with suicidal ideation for all of my adolescence and adult life thanks to the effects of testosterone puberty. Since transitioning, I've become confident, outgoing, present, rooted in my own body, and engaged with my community. I am mentally and emotionally well for the first time in my life. I am alive, and I want to live. It's hard for me to convey in words what it's like to see yourself in the mirror for the first time as an adult. To go from abstracted from your own body to present in it. To take your first real breath as a 33-year-old, and to realize that everything that came before was at best a half-life.

¹ "Medically necessary gender-affirmation surgery (GAS) refers to a constellation of procedures designed to align a person's body with their gender identity... Representative surgical interventions include...: AMAB: facial feminization surgery... AFAB: facial masculinization surgery." *Standards of Care for the Health of Transgender and Gender Diverse People, Version 8*, pp S129-130, available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/26895269.2022.2100644>

I have been fortunate to be able to access hormone therapy and other gender-affirming surgeries since transitioning. Each one has only amplified the feelings I've described above. Gender-affirming surgery has made my life immeasurably better, made me more at home in myself. The psychic weight of knowing that I may not be able to experience that same relief when I look at my own face - the most visible part of myself - is something that I would not wish on anybody.

In that same vein, I want every trans person to have full access to the gender-affirming care that we want and need. Right now, trans people and trans-related health care are under a sustained assault across the country. Transphobic legislators in multiple states are trying to force us back into the closet, to cut off our care, to force us to detransition, pushing us into fates worse than death. I personally know trans people from Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and other states who are fleeing to more supportive areas in order to access care and because of their fear of transphobic violence. You have a unique opportunity with this legislation to position Oregon as a beacon in the dark for trans people seeking care, and to ensure that we are able to live our lives fully, presently, authentically.

Please vote yes on HB 2002.

Callie Mae Riley
NE Portland