

Submitter: Eleanor Blue

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2002

Dear committee members,

Please consider this letter in strong support of House Bill 2002. The strengthening of reproductive rights and expansion of gender care in the state of Oregon are humane, common-sense, and good for all Oregonians.

I particularly want to speak to the gender affirming care provisions in this bill. As the owner of a growing business that provides health insurance to our employees in Oregon and several other states, it has been deeply concerning to learn that our insurance carrier is able, in this state, to refuse coverage of a number of medically-necessary interventions that my employees require for their health. The effect has been discriminatory, bad for the physical and mental health of our workers, and has resulted in difficulty hiring and retaining high-performing staff. If we were based over the border in Washington State, that state's Gender Affirming Treatment Act would ensure equitable gender care coverage for our workers. We would prefer to continue doing business in Oregon, and passage of this bill with this provision intact will help ensure that we can continue to do so.

There is a growing body of research showing that gender-affirming surgery has a strong, lasting, positive impact on physical and mental health. Insurance carriers classify some of these treatments as "cosmetic" and can under current laws choose not to cover them. But as any individual who's managed to secure this treatment knows, and as medical researchers are beginning to back up with studies, these treatments work. For example, a peer-reviewed 2022 study* found that when used in a gender-affirming context, facial feminization surgery significantly reduced anxiety and social isolation—while increasing positive affect, meaning and purpose, and global mental health. This and other studies show that these procedures are safe, effective at reducing anxiety, depression, and suicidality, and produce long-lasting improvements in quality of life.

Thank you for your time, and for taking the necessary steps to make sure that Oregonians retain our bodily autonomy and have increasing access to the health care we need.

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C. MD, PhD*,§. Effect of Gender-affirming Facial Feminization Surgery on Psychosocial Outcomes. *Annals of Surgery* ():10.1097/SLA.0000000000005472, July 4, 2022. | DOI: 10.1097/SLA.0000000000005472

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