

TO: Oregon House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

FROM: Leah Schwartz

RE: Support for HB 2002

Dear Chair Nosse, Vice Chair Goodwin and Nelson, and Committee Members,

I am a transgender woman living in Portland, Oregon. I began a medical gender transition five years ago. Since early adolescence, I had felt a deep unease about my body. I was excited to make a choice I hoped would address it. At the same time, the months leading up to my transition was full of emotional turmoil and many unknowns. How would my family react? Employers? Strangers? I took some comfort in knowing that I lived in a state with legal protections for insurance coverage of transition medical care. At least, unlike transgender women even a short time ago, I would have some security that key hormonal and surgical treatments would not be out of reach.

Still, there are gaps in coverage. During my early transition, I rarely left the house without applying foundation, worried that the traces of facial hair that remained after shaving would undermine my confidence during everyday interactions or inspire hostility. I soon began laser hair removal on my face. Later, I moved on to electrolysis. My health insurance has never covered this procedure. I have been forced to pay as much as \$180/appointment out of pocket. HB 2002 would remove the burden of this significant expense for me and other transgender women.

Gender transition is a long process. Life can't be put on hold. Since I began my medical transition, I have had several different health insurance plans due to changes in my educational and employment situation. The inconsistency of insurance coverage for some gender-affirming care has made it difficult to plan for surgeries that I hope will ultimately be part of my transition. HB 2002 would reduce this complexity and uncertainty.

Vote yes on HB 2002. Gender-affirming procedures are healthcare, and should be covered when medically necessary.

Leah Schwartz