

Submitter: Amy Ruff

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2002

March 19, 2023

House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

Amy Ruff, LCSW

RE: Support HB 2002

Chair Nosse, Vice-Chairs Goodwin and Nelson, Members of the Committee:

My name is Amy Ruff, LCSW and I am writing to express support for House Bill 2002, Reproductive Health and Access to Care, which will ensure that every person in Oregon has the ability to make decisions about their body and access the full range of reproductive, sexual, and gender affirming health care.

Access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health care is a basic human right. Nobody should be denied gender affirming care and like any other form of life-saving health care, gender affirming care should be accessible. As transgender rights in particular are under attack nationwide, Oregon has an opportunity to continue standing as a leader for LGBTQ+ rights and health care access. Washington state enacted very similar legislation to this bill in 2021, and there has been very little fiscal impact to that state.

As a licensed clinical social worker I have provided gender affirming care and support to transgender Oregonians since 2013. I cannot overemphasize how important access to therapy, hormones, and surgery is to transgender individuals. For many of my clients gender affirming care is integral to their survival and provides an opportunity for them to thrive in ways that were not possible prior to receiving gender affirming services. Waiting years to receive care, lack of insurance coverage, and insurance exclusions for hair removal are extremely common and damaging to transgender individuals navigating the medical system. All of these barriers contribute to negative mental health outcomes for transgender individuals and imperil vulnerable Oregonians.

It is also important to note that increasingly violent rhetoric and actions against the LGBTQ+ community and providers of gender affirming care has had a chilling effect on our community. By providing protections to providers and health care centers this bill will increase and sustain the pool of gender affirming care providers and ensure that patients seeking care will be able to focus on their medical needs as opposed to their physical safety.

For all of these reasons I urge your yes vote on HB 2002. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Amy Ruff, LCSW