

TO: Oregon House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

From: Emma Basques

RE: Support for HB2002

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

I am asking you to vote yes on HB2002, because gender-affirming health care is life-saving care. This bill will close gaps in insurance coverage of critical care for transgender Oregonians.

Hi I'm Emma. I'm also trans as some of you may know and I socially transitioned when I was 5 and it has been one of if not the best decision I have ever made. There have been some things that have made being trans challenging though, and that is what I'm here to discuss. The challenges I have faced are things like bullying and harassment. I was also denied medical coverage by my dad's employer who said "it is not a condition we covered. This happened in Arizona and is part of the reason we moved to Oregon.

Being denied medical care made me feel upset and angry. I mean how would you feel if you were denied the one thing that was supposed to be there to protect you and keep you healthy? You would probably feel mad.

It was so hard for us because every time I needed to get my puberty blockers we had to drive hours away to a clinic where my parents could pay out of pocket. I didn't know it at the time but this was really expensive for my parents. Because of this and other reasons, my family made the difficult decision to leave Arizona and move to Oregon. Here, we have amazing medical coverage. I can get puberty blockers at a doctor's office close to my house and it only costs \$5. This makes me feel happy and safe. I never have to worry about getting my blockers.

Oregon is already a leader on trans health care access, but gaps in insurance coverage still exist for care that is crucial for many trans people, including electrolysis (hair removal) and facial affirmation surgeries.

These procedures are seen as "cosmetic" under Oregon insurance policy, but I can assure you that for trans people, they are about so much more than cosmetics.

I am happy to have the medical support that Oregon gives me and I feel that this should be given to everyone that wants these types of surgeries and it's not fair when people say "Oh it's just something you want, not need" but it is something we need and not just physically but mentally as well. Imagine this, you're a girl right, you have the mindset and overall thoughts and feelings of a girl but then you also have facial hair. This would make you feel embarrassed and uncomfortable. So, when the opportunity of getting rid of it forever reveals itself, you're like, "Yessssss!" You finally have this chance to have your outside looks match your inside feelings. That's what these surgeries do for us. They make us happy and proud of ourselves. So that is my opinion on affordable access, it can do quite a lot for one person.

You have an opportunity to advance legislation that will be truly life-changing—and perhaps even lifesaving—for transgender Oregonians like me. Please remember my story when you are voting on this bill, and please vote yes on HB2002.

Thank you,

Emma Basques