

TO: Oregon House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care
FROM: Karen Krajcer, private citizen
RE: Support for HB 2002

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

My name is Karen Krajcer. I live in Portland, and I am here to voice my support for HB 2002. First off, I need to say that I am really happy to be here. A year ago, my family and I were living in Texas, a state that is not kind to its children, especially transgender kids like my daughter.

The gender affirming care that this bill protects and makes more financially accessible through health insurance is a matter of **safety**. We didn't move across the country because we wanted specific medical interventions for our daughter. We moved because we wanted our child to have the **right** to receive life-saving healthcare prescribed by her doctors.

A year ago, I asked my daughter if she might want to record a few words for an upcoming rally at the Texas Capitol. I suggested, *Maybe talk about how happy you are that your dad and I let you live as your authentic self.* What a bizarre question: *How do you feel about being allowed to be who you are?* We were in the car, so I want you to imagine hearing your child's little voice behind you. She asked me: "Am I going to die?" Now, even though more than 50% of trans youth seriously considered suicide in 2021,¹ she wasn't thinking about hurting herself. She wanted to know if someone/something was going to kill her just because of who she is.

I am—as I imagine most of you are—cisgender. The way we feel inside matches the way society expects us to be. And, as cis people, there are many things we don't think about because we don't have to. This fear that my daughter has—*Is someone going to hurt me?*—that's a reality for many trans people. The ability to match the outside with the inside will not only make my daughter less vulnerable to assault,² it will also reduce the likelihood that she will suffer from depression. Picture the manliest man; now imagine him developing breasts. Picture the most feminine of women; now imagine her growing a beard and an Adam's Apple. Something that might seem cosmetic (unnecessary) to us can be a matter of life and death for a trans person. Puberty blockers, which have been covered in Oregon since 2015, can eliminate the need for these procedures. These are matters that we don't think about but are constantly pressing on my daughter's mind. I didn't know this. I had to listen and learn. And part of my job as a parent is to put myself in my children's shoes and ask, *What does my child need?* That's also your job as legislators: *What do your constituents need?*

Gender-affirming healthcare ...is healthcare, and it is much harder to access than you might think. It's a private decision between the individual and their team of doctors and therapists

¹ 2022 National Study, Trevor Project

² Transgender people are over four times more likely than cisgender people to experience violent victimization, including rape, sexual assault, and aggravated or simple assault, according to a new study by the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law. (March 2021)

that occurs over the course of months or years. It is supported by major health, education, and child welfare associations, including the American Medical Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, American Psychiatric Association, the Child Welfare League of America, National Education Association, and National PTA.

Oregon is experiencing a mental health crisis. Making it easier for some of the state's most vulnerable people to access medical care will reduce the need for mental health services. If there were a pill that could prevent someone from wanting to hurt themselves, you wouldn't ask, is this necessary or cosmetic? It is the function of health insurance to cover medical recommendations, especially life-saving ones. And it is the function of state government to protect its constituents' needs.

I urge you to support this bill.

Thank you.

Karen Krajcer
Portland