

Submitter: Amy Penkin

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2002

Testimony in Support of HB 2002

House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

March 20, 2023

My name is Amy Penkin. I am a licensed clinical social worker at OHSU (Oregon Health & Science University) and Program Manager of the OHSU Transgender Health Program. I support HB 2002 on behalf of the patients and community I serve, and more personally, on behalf of my transgender family members. It is my job at OHSU to address barriers to care, and ensure we are doing everything possible to equitably deliver life-saving gender affirming treatments to any who seek it through our program.

According to the 2015 National US Trans Survey, 55% of individuals seeking transition related care were denied coverage. 42% of individuals were only partially covered for their transition related care (James, 2016). Poor access to necessary care is a major contributor to the excess psychological distress experienced by transgender individuals in comparison with the US population. (James, 2016)

As healthcare providers we are ethically responsible to carefully and thoughtfully assess and treat individuals with gender incongruence/gender dysphoria. This bill ensures we are able to inform our patients that the medically necessary treatment will in fact be available as their care plan.

In Oregon, individuals seeking facial surgery or hair removal often don't have coverage or a covered provider under their plan for these services. It is an all too frequent occurrence for me to hear our patients making statements of despair, threats of self-harm, and declarations of life not being worth living due to their inability to modify their facial features and/or remove unwanted hair. This is preventable. No one deserves to live in fear or believe they have no choice but to end their life because they can't access medically necessary care.

This bill proposes closing gaps in coverage that will be deeply impactful for all community members, but particularly for transgender women.

I urge you to vote yes to ensure essential medically necessary life saving care is available to all who seek it. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
Amy Penkin, LCSW

Clinical Program Manager
OHSU Transgender Health Program

Reference

James, S. E. (2016). The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey. Washington DC: National Center for Transgender Equality.