

Submitter: Jess G

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2002

TO: Oregon House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

FROM: Jess G, pediatric social worker

RE: Support for HB 2002

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

My name is Jess and I am an Oregon behavioral health provider working in a pediatric gender care clinic. Historically, I have also worked in crisis services, residential programs, and intensive community-based treatment organizations, where gender diverse youth and young adults were disproportionately represented in client populations and affected by negative mental health outcomes. As a social worker in a gender clinic, I have worked with patients across the lifespan and have seen the significant positive impact that existing Oregon laws, policies, and access to care have had on individuals' abilities to build social relationships, seek the medical and mental health care they need (separate from gender care), and engage in life in ways that were not possible prior to 2015.

While there is incredible creativity, resilience, and bravery in trans and gender diverse communities, it is starting to feel like hollow affirmation to continue giving patients this message while people and systems around them are failing them. HB 2002 has the opportunity to change this and differentiate Oregon as a place where all citizens have the right to pursue life to the fullest extent.

I am asking you to vote YES on HB 2002, because gender-affirming care is lifesaving and medically-necessary care. Oregon has already demonstrated a commitment to this care and the bill will address gaps in coverage that still exist for care that is crucial for many trans people, including electrolysis (hair removal) necessary for safety and surgery, and facial affirmation surgeries. The bill will also encourage providers to begin or continue providing care in this current political climate, where the fear of personal safety and professional liability has driven many away from offering gender affirming care.

In our current climate, I hear daily about experiences of distress because folks are having to wait 1-2 years to even get their foot in the door to pursue various types of care, including basic mental health treatment. I also hear providers raise concern – not about the merits of the care itself, but about the harm that may come to their patients, families, and themselves if they become known for treating gender diverse patients. HB 2002 would communicate to patients and providers that they are valued

members of the state of Oregon, and are worthy of legal protection. Not passing HB 2002 would put patients at greater ongoing risk for negative health and mental health outcomes, and would increase the likelihood of provider burnout and further limit access to care.

By voting to advance this crucial legislation, you will be making our health care system more equitable, and opening countless doors of opportunity for transgender Oregonians. You will not be changing the age of consent or taking any specific stand on gender affirming care for youth, though the opponents of this bill would lead you to believe you are.

Please remember my story when you are voting on this bill, and please vote YES on HB 2002.

Thank you,
Jess G