

Date: February 4, 2026  
To: House Committee on Judiciary  
From: Debra Koutnik, MD, FAAP  
Subject: Support for HB 4088

As a pediatrician for 34 years who has provided medically necessary healthcare to gender expansive youth for more than 15 years, I urge you to pass HB 4088.

Nearly 40% of transgender youth live in states that have enacted bans on gender affirming care, creating a demand for out of state services. While medically unqualified politicians can try to dictate healthcare in their states, this does not change the needs of transgender youth for healthcare that affirms their identity, decreases the significant levels of distress around their body, and allows them to live as their true selves.

As a state with protective laws that respect the rights of gender expansive individuals, including youth and their families, Oregon is a destination for care from nearby restrictive states. Transgender youth who are not supported in their identities are likely to have poor outcomes in both their physical and mental health. Thus Oregon licensed healthcare providers trained in gender affirming care have a duty to provide the best possible care for gender expansive youth, regardless of their state of residence.

Unfortunately, since 2020, after Donald Trump lost the Presidential election, there has been an exponential, politically motivated, increase in various attacks on transgender individuals, their families, and those who provide medically necessary healthcare. And since January 2025, the Trump administration has done everything they can to reduce the availability of care for transgender youth, including intimidation of healthcare providers, threats to withhold funds from healthcare systems, sending subpoenas to clinics and hospitals demanding confidential information on transgender patients including private medical chart notes and individual identifying information, and even threatening prosecution of healthcare providers.

Currently, 27 states have enacted laws that restrict or ban gender affirming healthcare for minors, and 7 states have laws that criminalize providing this medically necessary healthcare, including Idaho where it is punishable by up to 10 years in prison for healthcare providers.

HB 4088 stands up for the rights, dignity, privacy, and autonomy of patients, their families, and their healthcare providers like me. Given the toxic environment currently created to harass, shame, threaten, and even criminalize transgender youth and their healthcare providers, it is absolutely necessary for the state of Oregon to explicitly protect both patients and providers in our state from the bigoted, ignorant, unjust, and medically unfounded laws in neighboring states.

Every reputable medical organization in America, including the 67,000 member American Academy of Pediatrics, endorses and recommends individualized medical care for transgender youth tailored to their unique goals and needs.

Oregon must remain a legal, safe, and accessible refuge for gender expansive individuals and their families where evidence based best medical practice is honored, protected and available to all who need it.

Respectfully,

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