



## LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

Bill: **SB460/HB283 Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Gender–Affirming Treatment (Trans Health Equity Act)**

Organization: PFLAG Salisbury Inc., PO Box 5107, Salisbury Maryland 21802

Submitted by: Nicole Hollywood, President of the Board

Position: **FAVORABLE**

### **SALISBURY PFLAG SUPPORTS THE TRANS HEALTH EQUITY ACT**

I am submitting this testimony in FAVOR of SB460/HB283 on behalf of PFLAG Salisbury, the Salisbury, Maryland Chapter of PFLAG National.

LGBTQIA+ people experience a number of health disparities. They are at higher risk of certain conditions, have significantly less access to health care, and have worse health outcomes. These disparities come from a combination of homophobia and transphobia, a lack of access to affirming healthcare, misinformation, and inequities in our health care system.

Trans Maryland explains that the transgender community in Maryland “faces countless obstacles to obtaining the healthcare we need. We currently have a tiered system where some trans people with some insurances receive one level of care, while low-income trans Marylanders on Medicaid are denied countless gender affirming and life saving procedures.”

Gender-affirming care, as defined by the World Health Organization, encompasses a range of social, psychological, behavioral, and medical interventions “designed to support and affirm an individual’s gender identity” when it conflicts with the gender they were assigned at birth. The interventions help transgender and gender non-conforming individuals align various aspects of their lives — emotional, interpersonal, and biological — with their gender identity.

Transitioning is the process of progressing beyond ones gender assigned at birth to one's actual gender. Transitioning often includes social elements such as changing clothing, hair, names, and pronouns. It may include legal processes such as changing ones gender markers as well as one's legal name. It also may include gender-affirming medical treatments such as counseling, gender-affirming vocal care, laser hair removal, hormone blockers and/or replacement therapy, or various surgeries. These medical interventions are both necessary and life-affirming. More specifically, gender-affirming healthcare

practices have been shown in the research to result in lower rates of mental health issues, healthier self-esteem, and improve individual's overall quality of life.

According to the Human Rights Campaign, "Every credible medical organization, including the American Medical Association and the Academy of Pediatrics, supports age-appropriate, gender-affirming care for transgender and non-binary people. These doctors represent over 1.3 million doctors in the United States. Gender-affirming care has always existed and isn't a new phenomenon."

SB460/HB283 would require the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to provide gender-affirming treatment in a nondiscriminatory manner; requiring that the gender-affirming treatment be assessed according to nondiscriminatory criteria that are consistent with current clinical standards; prohibiting the issuance of an adverse benefit determination related to gender-affirming treatment unless a certain experienced health care provider has reviewed and confirmed the appropriateness of the determination; etc.

SB460/HB283 will help address gross inequities in Maryland's current healthcare system that will greatly enhance the quality of life of thousands of transgender Marylanders. Because of this, PFLAG Salisbury Inc. supports SB460/HB283 and recommends a FAVORABLE report in committee.