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Committee on Health and Human Services

LD 1040 (HP 676) “An Act to Require Reimbursement for Gender-affirming Care for MaineCare Members”

April 3, 2023

Dear Senator Joseph Baldacci, Representative Michele Myers and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

I am an adult-gerontology nurse practitioner from Portland practicing in a FQHC in Newport and a member of the Maine Nurse Practitioners Association (MNPA) legislative committee. I am writing testimony today on behalf of MNPA to ask your support of LD 1040 “An Act to Require Reimbursement for Gender-affirming Care for MaineCare Members”. Most of my patients are recipients of MaineCare services; a few are transgender and in need of gender-affirming care. Medically necessary gender-affirming care includes hormone therapy, mental health counseling and social integration and gender-affirming surgical procedures. Almost all are covered under MaineCare with prior authorization required for many services. The prior authorization process can often delay or interrupt therapy as it stands now. I have seen hormone therapy delayed or interrupted several times in my practice.

For example, a trans female seeking vaginoplasty- a procedure to create a vaginal vault- medical electrolysis to permanently remove existing pubic hair is not explicitly covered under MaineCare. This procedure is medically necessary to ensure complete hair removal in the area being used to surgically create a vaginal vault. Electrolysis works on this region regardless of hair color, hair type or amount of hair. Laser hair removal may not be permanent, has limits on hair color and type and may lead to errant hair regrowth causing post-surgical complications. The cost of electrolysis can range from \$100 - \$200 per session with 4-8 sessions required. Additionally, the electrolysis must be completed in a specified time frame prior to the surgery for best outcomes.

By not covering all aspects of gender-affirming care including preparation needed for covered procedures, MaineCare is reducing access to care for this population. Delays in care may result in prolonged surgery rescheduling. Again, we urge you to support this bill and your transgender constituents in order that these discriminatory policies regarding prior authorization and non-coverage for medically necessary procedures may end.

Respectfully submitted,

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