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redefining gender

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Testimony of Maine Transgender Network

LD 1040: "An Act to Require Reimbursement for Gender-affirming Care for MaineCare Members"

April 12, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Quinn Gormley, I use she/her pronouns, and I am here today as the Executive Director of the Maine Transgender Network, Maine's sole organization specifically dedicated to supporting transgender people and those who love us, in enthusiastic support of **LD 1040: "An Act to Require Reimbursement for Gender-affirming Care for MaineCare Members."**

This coverage was a monumental change.

There are few days I remember as well as June 19, 2019, the Mills administration announced the removal of exclusions on gender affirming health care from MaineCare. There isn't really an equivalent to the incredible feeling that came with achieving marriage equality, but this came close. Between 2011 and 2019, roughly one in three of the nearly eighteen thousand emails we received from transgender Mainers asked the same question: "does Mainecare cover gender affirming care?" For years, we had to tell people "no, the care you need isn't covered. Good luck." But finally, we were able to say "yes, your care is covered. Your government believes you. Here's what you need to do."

Trans Mainers use this care.

That change was extraordinary, and we are deeply grateful for the providers across Maine, especially our family planning providers, who worked with us to accommodate a massive influx of patients in a short period of time. According to data from the 2021 Maine Transgender Community Survey, 27% of trans Mainers are on Mainecare. This represents roughly three to four thousand Mainers, about 70% of whom indicate they access gender affirming care. Trans Mainers experience a poverty rate about twice that of the general population (25% vs. 12%), and Mainecare membership is higher among trans Mainers who experience multiple marginalization, such as trans people with disabilities, of color, in rural communities, youth, and veterans.

Mainecare coverage is good for all care.

It's worth noting that gender affirming care coverage has health implications beyond access to this evidence based, medically necessary care. A comparison between trans Mainers who use Mainecare, and those who use private insurance suggests Mainecare coverage supports health access overall. Trans Mainers on Mainecare are about 50% more likely to have seen a primary care provider in the last 12 months, they are twice as likely to have an ongoing relationship with a mental health provider, and they are half as likely to report interruptions in accessing their hormones, diabetes medicine, and psychiatric medicine. These differences are especially pronounced among Mainecare recipients who receive gender affirming care within the context of primary care.

This care needs to be protected.

Given that this care is already provided under Mainecare, you may ask why it needs to be put into statute. The answer is simple. Gender affirming healthcare, which is supported by the every major medical organization in the United States Despite this, this care is being targeted by a coordinated, national campaign that seeks to remove transgender Americans from public life. Much of this campaign targets gender affirming care provision with minors, but it is not limited to this. At least four states are considering bills this year that would ban coverage of this care for adults. Several states would go a step further and criminalize accessing or providing this care to some or all adults. Florida is considering implicating accessing gender affirming care by any member of a household as grounds for child protection service intervention.

Essential, evidence based, life saving and affirming care should not be subject to these attacks. By ensuring this care in Maine Statues, you can protect this care for generations to come.

Thank you,

Quinn Gormley
she/her
Executive Director
Maine Transgender Network