



**Consumers for
Affordable
Health Care**

Advocating the right to quality, affordable
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**Statement of Ceilidh Shea
Consumers for Affordable Health Care
To the Joint Standing Committee On Health and Human Services**

Speaking in Support of:

LD 1040, An Act to Require Reimbursement for Gender-affirming Care for MaineCare Members.

April 12, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee On Health and Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments in support of LD 1040, An Act to Require Reimbursement for Gender-affirming Care for MaineCare Members.

My name Ceilidh Shea and I am a Policy Advocate at Consumers for Affordable Health Care. Our HelpLine, fields approximately 6,000 calls and emails every year from people across Maine who need help obtaining, keeping, using, or fixing problems with private health insurance or with accessing or affording health care services. CAHC also serves as the Ombudsman program for Maine's Medicaid program, MaineCare, and helps people apply for and navigate the enrollment process for MaineCare. It is with that background that we provide these comments.

We appreciate steps taken by the Department to remove discriminatory exclusions and provide MaineCare coverage for gender-affirming care through rulemaking. The codification of this coverage requirement in statute is of the utmost importance to ensure trans Mainers continue to have access to MaineCare coverage for these medically necessary services. despite potential changes in approach to trans care in future administrations. This bill would create statute that ensures the department will provide reimbursement for medically necessary treatment for or related to gender dysphoria.

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 people align various aspects of their lives — emotional, interpersonal, and biological — with their gender identity.ⁱ Medical interventions fall along a continuum, from counseling to changes in social expression to medications (such as hormone therapy) or surgical procedures. Gender-affirming care is safe, effective, and vital to the health and well-being of transgender people.

Those who seek gender-affirming care are often experiencing gender dysphoria, which the American Psychological Association defines as "psychological distress" stemming from the incongruence between gender assignment and identity. Although many transgender people feel this distress without being diagnosed by a doctor, gender dysphoria is a defined clinical condition in the APA's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.ⁱⁱ When gender dysphoria goes untreated, it accentuates the health disparities that exist amongst trans communities. There are disproportionate rates of depression and suicidal ideation both nationwide and here in Maine. According to the Trevor Project's 2022

National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health, nearly 1 in 5 transgender and nonbinary youth attempted suicide in the past year.ⁱⁱⁱ Additionally, 93% of transgender and nonbinary youth said that they have worried about transgender people being denied access to gender-affirming medical care due to state or local laws.^{iv} This legislation will reaffirm Maine's commitment to ensuring trans Mainers have access to the lifesaving care they need, and therefore, better mental and physical health outcomes. It is for all of these reasons that I urge you to support LD 1040. Thank you and I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.

ⁱ <https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/what-gender-affirming-care-your-questions-answered>

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ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2022/>

^{iv} <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2022/>