

TO: Oregon House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care
FROM: Tamara Bryan
RE: Support for HB 2002

Dear Chair Nosse, Vice Chair Goodwin and Nelson, and Committee Members,

I am asking you to vote yes on HB 2002, because gender-affirming health care is life-saving care. This bill will close gaps in insurance coverage of critical care for transgender Oregonians.

Five years ago, our son came out to us as trans when he was 13 years old. The next two years were an intense process of therapy and social and medical transition but we saw our son go from withdrawn and depressed back to the happy, inquisitive, thriving child we had known. My husband and I are incredibly grateful throughout that process that we had very good insurance and that we lived in Portland, Oregon where there is more access to gender affirming care and greater acceptance of trans people. Even so, we did have to pay out of pocket for laser treatment for his top surgery scar. We were able to save enough to be able to give that care to our son but it was a financial stretch. We know too many trans people who do not have the insurance we do or the financial means to cover treatments not covered by insurance. Today our son is 18 and heading off to college, fully confident in who he is. Every parent should be able to have that for their child; every person deserves that kind of care.

Oregon is already a leader on trans health care access, but gaps in insurance coverage still exist for care that is crucial for many trans people, including electrolysis (hair removal) and facial affirmation surgeries.

These procedures are seen as “cosmetic” under Oregon insurance policy, but I can assure you that for trans people, these are medically necessary procedures that improve life outcomes for this population. We’ve seen the outcome first hand with our son. He is a dancer and often has to perform shirtless and being able to do so without worrying about a highly visible scar meant so much for his self confidence and body image. He just performed at the national high school dance festival and took 3rd place, something he would not have been able to do if he hadn’t had access to the gender affirming care that he did.

You have an opportunity to advance legislation that will be truly life-changing—and perhaps even lifesaving—for transgender Oregonians like my son. Please remember his story when you are voting on this bill, and please vote yes on HB 2002.

Thank you,

Tamara Bryan