

TO: Oregon House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

FROM: Suzanne Scopes ND

RE: Support for HB 2002

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

My name is Dr. Suzanne Scopes and I am an Oregon naturopathic primary health provider/advocate. I have specialized in providing gender affirming health care for three decades in Portland. I hear the stories and see the struggles of my patients in obtaining appropriate gender affirming care. These barriers increase dysphoria and the resultant risk of suicide.

I am asking you to vote YES on HB 2002, because gender-affirming care is lifesaving care. According to the 2015 US Trans Survey, transgender people are nine times more likely to attempt suicide compared to the wider US population—but access to gender-affirming care can greatly alleviate this problem.

Oregon is already a leader on trans health care access: Since 2015, the Oregon Health Program and private insurers have covered certain gender-affirming care procedures. But gaps in coverage still exist for care that is crucial for many trans people, including electrolysis (hair removal) necessary for safety and surgery, and facial affirmation surgeries.

I have had trans female patients report physical violence when they are gendered by others as male, due to having facial hair or masculine facial features. They also frequently experience discrimination in employment for the same reason. This increases dysphoria which increases risk for suicide and substance abuse.

HB XX will help close these coverage gaps in live-saving gender-affirming care access for transgender Oregonians.

This is very real to me, having had a number of transgender patients end their own lives due to discrimination. Denial of care which can effectively treat gender dysphoria adds a huge burden to a population who already struggles. Some of my more privileged patients have been able to pay out of pocket for expensive procedures to address their dysphoria. But for the vast majority, especially transgender women, patients of color and low income patients, the barriers make their lives so much more difficult.

By voting to advance this crucial legislation, you will be making our health care system more equitable, and opening countless doors of opportunity for transgender Oregonians.

Please remember my story when you are voting on this bill, and please vote YES on HB 2002.

Thank you,

Suzanne Scopes, ND