

Submitter: Orion Rodriguez

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2002

Hello, my name is Orion Rodriguez. I am a mixed-race person of Indigenous ancestry from the Latin Diaspora. I am queer, Two Spirit, and transmasculine. I am writing to express my support for HB 2002 and share my experiences in the hopes that it will demonstrate why marginalized communities need these protections.

I was assigned female at birth. I have a uterus and I have been pregnant when I didn't want to be. I have had two different forms of birth control fail, both while I was in an emotionally, sexually, and physically abusive relationship with a cisgender man. Being able to access abortion services saved my life. Not only does research show that pregnant people are dramatically more likely to be abused or even killed by their partners than people who are not pregnant, I have no doubt that my ex-husband would have used any children we had together as a tool against me in the legal system. But because I was able to access abortion when my unwanted pregnancies occurred, that didn't happen.

Because I didn't have to worry about negotiating child custody, I was able to exit the relationship safely. I was not legally required to be in contact with my abuser or leave vulnerable children alone with him. I was not required to furnish him with my home address - and when he began to stalk and harrass me following our breakup, I was able to easily apply to Oregon's Address Protection Program to have my information removed from the public record. I often think about how much more difficult it would have been to cut contact and move on with my life if we had children together. I feel incredibly fortunate as a survivor of domestic violence that I could make a clean break.

I have never regretted my abortions. Not only did I prevent any children we might have had from suffering at the hands of their father, but I can be a better parent when I am ready to start a family in the future. I have always wanted children. But I want those children to grow up safe, happy, and loved. Abortion is what will allow me to be the parent they deserve.

As a transmasculine person, I also wish to express my support for enshrining gender-affirming coverage into Oregon law. If abortion saved my life physically, then being able to transition saved me emotionally. My ex-husband was incredibly transphobic and controlling in addition to being violent. When I was with him, he verbally degraded and insulted me when I spoke about my gender identity. After leaving, I was finally able to live as myself. I have been on testosterone therapy for four years and had a double mastectomy to masculinize my chest three years ago. I feel as if

my life never really began until I was able to access transition care. I was going through the motions before. Now, I have a rich, vibrant life and I feel so connected to my community. I volunteer for multiple organizations and I run support groups for other trans folks and queer people of color.

My story is not unique. It is tragically, painfully ordinary. There is a hidden epidemic of domestic violence facing the transmasculine community, and reproductive coercion is a major concern. The 2015 US Transgender Survey found that a staggering 54% of the trans community has experienced abuse at the hands of a romantic partner, and research by the advocacy organization FORGE finds that trans men are about 20% more likely than cisgender women to be victims of sexual assault and violence. But this abuse is invisible - I never hear DV advocates speak about it. There are no resources for us to turn to when we try to leave, unless we want to go back into closet and present as cis women, and accept being misgendered and revictimized by having our lived realities denied. There is still so much work to do in protecting transmasculine abuse survivors. But HB 2002 is a necessary first step in protecting the thousands of trans and nonbinary people who are capable of giving birth in Oregon.

Thank you for your time and your attention to this issue.