

March 20th, 2023

TO: Chair Nosse, Vice-Chair Goodwin, Vice-Chair Nelson, and Members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

RE: Support of HB 2002

Thank you for hearing this bill and the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Dr. Andrea Haverkamp, and I am the political organizer for the American Federation of Teachers – Oregon. Our statewide labor federation represents over 18,000 members across the education workforce of Oregon. AFT-Oregon strongly encourages your support of HB 2002 as a needed measure to protect, support, and expand access to reproductive health and gender affirming care.

Oregonians have consistently affirmed their commitment to safe and accessible abortion. Currently, the *Dobbs* decision has worsened the public health crisis around abortion care. Its effects are being felt in Oregon already. Without further protections, people of color and low-income families are more at risk for further economic and health consequences. There is now increased threat of criminalization too. The President of the American Federation of Teachers, Randi Weingarten, has stated that “this decision has massive, far-reaching implications for every person in this country, and puts those of us who teach students, take care of patients and serve our communities in particularly precarious positions. We knew this decision was coming, but the damage of reversing Roe is shocking nonetheless.”¹

This struggle for bodily autonomy and health care access is linked to the needs of transgender and gender nonconforming Oregonians. Our labor federation has consistently affirmed our commitment to transgender union siblings and their healthcare. In 2019, AFT-Oregon’s statewide convention passed a resolution titled “Support for Transgender, Nonbinary, and Gender-nonconforming Workers” and the year prior had passed a “Resolution to Bargain for Trans Healthcare.” Both resolutions were passed with the knowledge that solidarity is a core union value. We further understand the research which outlines that Black, Indigenous, and people of color in the trans community and those with disabilities face disproportionate barriers to healthcare, housing, jobs, and safety, including in education environments.²³

House Bill 2002 centers those who face the most barriers to accessing care. This is a bill that meets the moment. The recommendations from Speaker Rayfield’s *Reproductive Health and Access to Care Work Group* were developed in lockstep with impacted communities, providers, and organizations working on the ground to meet this moment. These recommendations include but are not limited to:

- **Protecting Providers and Health Centers**
 - Protecting providers’ ability to provide care to all patients who seek gender affirming care and reproductive healthcare in Oregon.
 - Preventing interference with health care centers and protecting providers from harassment and abuse.
 - Ensuring the confidentiality and privacy of providers is protected.
- **Expanding Access to Care:**
 - Closing gaps in insurance coverage for gender affirming care, contraception access on OHP, and reproductive healthcare services at public universities.
 - Enhancing access to care in medically underserved regions through a pilot mobile health clinic program.
 - Addressing reproductive health care deserts by expanding services at existing health centers at public institutions.

¹ <https://www.aft.org/press-release/afts-weingarten-slams-supreme-court-ruling-overturning-roe-v-wade>

² Goldberg, A. (2018). *Transgender Students in Higher Education*. The Williams Institute.

³ James, S., Herman, J., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Anafi, M. (2016). *The report of the 2015 U.S. transgender survey*. National Center for Transgender Equality.

- **Ensuring Fundamental Rights**

- Protecting individuals from prosecution for seeking or supporting reproductive and gender affirming care that is legal in our state.
- Codifying the right to the full spectrum of reproductive care.
- Preventing individuals from being criminalized for any pregnancy outcome.

Everyone deserves access to lifesaving medical care, and no one should be denied gender affirming care. In 2023 alone, more than 300 bills attacking LGBTQ+ people have been introduced to state legislatures across the nation. Most of these bills target transgender people. Over a dozen states have already restricted the basic rights of transgender people, including a handful of states that have banned healthcare for trans youth. In this time of crisis for transgender, gender nonconforming, and nonbinary people, Oregon has an opportunity to lead by example.

Access to the full range of gender, sexual, and reproductive healthcare is a human right. Period.

For too many Oregonians, reproductive and gender affirming care are still out-of-reach because of geography, income, or insurance coverage. Eighteen states currently have abortion bans or serious restrictions in effect, including our neighbor Idaho. This decreased access exacerbates existing reproductive health care deserts, especially in Eastern Oregon, as our state experiences a surge in out-of-state patients.

I have personal experience with this issue, and this bill would help ensure that others in the future do not have the same barriers. I first sought to access gender-affirming healthcare in 2016. At the time, my current employer did not cover *any* gender affirming care. I changed jobs to access a healthcare plan that included gender affirming care. It was a union job represented by AFT-Oregon. This healthcare proved to be lifesaving. However, I had two medically necessary procedures denied by insurance at the time, they deemed one “unnecessary” and the other “cosmetic.” I had three letters from professionals (a medical doctor, a licensed social worker, and a psychiatrist) which explicitly stated that they were medically necessary. I spent months conducting research, obtaining supportive scientific studies and health standards, finding insurance plans that covered the full range of gender affirming care, and fighting my appeal. I was fortunate that I had a Nurse Case Manager at my insurance company who advocated on my behalf and helped me throughout the entire process. Our labor union also launched a campaign for trans healthcare because I was just one of many employees having the same barriers and denials of service. Ultimately, after a letter writing campaign, meetings with management, and lots of pressure, our employer ensured that the insurance would cover all gender affirming care. I spent five years driving hours to Portland, Eugene, and San Francisco to access healthcare due to the Mid-Willamette Valley being an area with little to no reliable gender affirming healthcare options as well.

Not all Oregonians are as fortunate as I was to have a labor union at their backs, dozens of coworkers willing to write letters and organize, a scientific research background to form a strong medical appeal case, and the time capacity to arrange for all that was necessary. It was unduly difficult and expensive. My fight should be history. Moving forward, affirming healthcare access should be a reliable standard that everyone can rely on.

Our labor federation is a coalition member for the Fair Shot Agenda, and HB 2002 matches our values and membership needs. We encourage a Yes vote on HB 2002. Thank you for your time,



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American Federation of Teachers - Oregon