

Submitter: Rebecca Cantone

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2002

March 20, 2023

Support of HB 2002

Chair Nosse, Vice-Chairs Goodwin and Nelson, and Members of the Committee, My name is Dr. Cantone, and I am writing to express support for House Bill 2002, Reproductive Health and Access to Care, to help every person in Oregon have an ability to make decisions about their own body and access the full range of reproductive, sexual and gender affirming care.

For 8 years, I have been serving a rural community in Oregon devastated by restrictive views on LGBTQIA+ issues and abortion, leading to poor access of care for those who need it to save their lives, and risking my reputation and life for those who know I offer such care. At the same time, I have patients driving over an hour to see me because of restrictions on primary care insurance coverage of these services. It should be made clear that no one will ever FORCE this care upon someone, but that each individual should have the right to choose what happens to their own bodies without fear of persecution or only offering services to those with financial resources to pay and travel to receive this care?

I have countless stories of patients whose lives have been saved by this care. First - patients driving from 1 hour away thinking there was no hope. Patients covered by tri-care insurance, limiting service and primary care with nearly zero other options for this care. A government that allows nonbinary passports (hooray) but only if people pay out of pocket to receive gender affirming care. A lack of options for people who don't live in big cities or close to Portland with options to care. The shift from uncontrolled depression and anxiety to functional lifestyles, relationships, work, and more is outstanding to see. The history of multiple suicide attempts to fulfilled life cannot be discounted. Patients who live just a few minutes from our clinic had no idea we provided medical terminations, either, and were so scared to ask prior to this national decision, and I can't imagine how many will try to self-terminate without clear protections in place now. Seeing the fear of an unwanted, unplanned pregnancy to the hope of having options available, is an honor and privilege to see and instill hope and happiness in human lives. But how are we to continue to provide this life-saving care without protections to our patients and our provider teams, who live, work, and/or drive/walk around our community that opposes such care? How can we provide this in a community that openly banned us having an LGBTQIA+ pride parade that echoes that of Portland? How can I safely support this bill, which I do at my own risk of threats from my work community, when I have already been threatened and 'fired' by patients knowing I provide this care, something I fear will continue even while I write this?

I urge you all to vote in favor of this bill to support the meaningful lives of humans who have already been under attack for generations.

Thank you for your consideration,

Dr. Rebecca E Cantone, MD

Views are my own and do not represent my employer