

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

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

My name is Carolyn. I am a trans woman who moved from Kentucky to Eugene, Oregon a little over a year ago. Even back then, I along with many other trans people across the country were able to foresee the terrifying direction many states were intent on heading when it came to our rights, which is what prompted my move here. Oregon, among other states, has a reputation of being a safe state for LGBTQ people and transgender people like me in particular. While it was a long journey to get here, I made it, and I immediately began to pursue my continuation of gender affirming care. Thankfully, I was able to quite quickly find a doctor who would continue prescribing me my feminizing hormone replacement therapy and begin taking my first steps with OHSU and a local electrologist toward surgery. While I'm very glad things went as well for me as they did, and I do feel far safer here in Oregon than I did in Kentucky, I have encountered a few unexpected hurdles.

The first hurdle I encountered was the difficulty I had in getting my electrolysis hair removal in preparation for surgery covered. Because this surgery is extremely important for me personally, I wanted to start preparing for it as soon as possible, it also takes a long time to complete. Electrolysis hair removal on a surgery site is only covered for surgery preparation once you've been approved by a surgeon but there are long waitlists for even a consultation for gender affirming surgeries. Unfortunately, this meant I had to pay out of pocket for three costly procedures before my consultation at OHSU and one time after because of the prior authorization not having been filed at the time. During this time, I was still struggling to find stable housing while still providing for my found sister, and the extra expenses that would eventually total \$2400 over the course of eight months cut into the already very thinly spread budget of a girl making a fairly meager hourly wage. Had this been covered, I would have been able to put that money toward finding stable housing far sooner than we did.

The second hurdle that I have encountered and am still unable to overcome once again relates to the lack of electrolysis covered. Like the vast majority of trans women today, I transitioned after undergoing a testosterone influenced puberty, and thus, again like the vast majority of trans women, I do suffer from having to manage my facial hair. Thankfully, during my time in Kentucky, I was able to afford some laser treatment for it so that it is less visible, but because I have not had the resources to afford electrolysis for it here, I still wake up most mornings having to feel these coarse, rough, prickly hairs on my face that I feel very confident in saying would cause most women a great deal of distress to have, and I am no different in this regard. On days when I can feel them on my face, I barely feel like a person because of just how

incongruent having that feels with who I am, and having no options to alleviate this issue available to me right now does leave me feeling trapped.

However, now that I have been here for a year, I know this state legislature and our governor will make the right decision on HB 2002. In a country with over 400 anti-trans bills being run through nearly every state legislature, Oregon is one of the states many transgender people are going to look to as a potential beacon of hope in an increasingly hostile political climate toward them. I know cities like Portland and Eugene among other cities in this state pride themselves on their high degree of LGBTQ+ acceptance, and I see HB 2002 as yet another step toward reinforcing that reputation. Every day I've been here since arriving back in November of 2021, I have felt like I've found a safe place to truly call home, and so I call on every legislator here today to please vote yes on this bill to really drive that message home for every transgender person living here, that not only do we belong here, but that this great state of Oregon is one place in the country that we will absolutely be able to thrive.

Thank you.