

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

Hi, my name is June Whitcomb, and I am writing to provide context for HB2002. I have been a resident of Multnomah County since 2005, where I am employed as a medical laboratory supervisor. I am also a transgendered woman, parenting a neurodiverse teenager, a child that my spouse and I adopted from foster care. I have strong values around being a productive member of a just society and creating a safe culture where all individuals can thrive. These values are what directed me to a career in healthcare and what guide me as a parent. These values are also what compel me to give personal testimony to this bill that would increase access to gender affirming care and protect the providers of that care.

The American Medical Association asserts that “gender affirming care is medically necessary, evidence-based care that improves the physical and mental health of transgender and gender-diverse people.” Yet, many states are denying access to that care and putting the lives of transgendered children and adults at risk. My hope is that Oregon will take a stand in supporting the wellbeing of these people by elevating standards of care in our state to a level that is on par with the recommendations of the medical community. Furthermore, when medical professionals adhere to the ethical duty of providing the best care possible, evidenced-based care, they should have protection from political threat due to differing ideologies.

As a member of the transgender community, I have felt the extreme distress of gender misalignment and bare witness to how others in the community struggle when access to gender affirming resources is denied or difficult to access. Even though transgendered individuals have shown their value in many segments of society, as artists, scientists, teachers and caregivers, we are often stigmatized in workplaces that can be fraught with the challenges of fitting in or that are hostile to our presence. My history is that of being bullied throughout my school years by girls and boys alike, eventually leading to being kept inside during recess. As a young adult, I was verbally and physically harassed for wearing a dress in public. Even now, as an adult, I hear insults directed at me while grocery shopping for my family. For years, I was terrified at revealing my gender identity at work for fear of losing income and status because of micro aggressions towards the trans community that I consistently heard. During that time, I struggled to live up to my own values and felt that I was losing my ability to be a good parent and a trusted professional because the long-term effects of suppressing my gender were depression and shame. Gender affirming care offered a chance of finding resilience in the face of these difficulties. social transition support, along with hormone and mental health therapies over the past few years, has given me hope and opportunity to repair some of the harm I encountered throughout life as a transgender person. Feeling at peace within my body is a source of strength and confidence that allows me to continue to serve as part of a healthcare system, be an engaged parent and strive for a better society.

Throughout my experiences, I can recognize there was also privilege afforded to me that others do not have. When I am making choices about what care to access, such as facial hair removal or feminization surgeries, I am balancing my wellbeing against things like sending my child to college. For others, this balancing act is about whether to eat, to invest in their future through education. This bill would help close that gap and provide more even access to care. An hour of electrolysis in the Portland area can cost \$75 to \$125. Full facial hair removal takes on average from 100 to 400 hours and amounts to an

out-of-pocket cost from \$8,000 to over \$15,000. Meanwhile, not taking steps to alleviate the discomfort of gender misalignment leads to mental health issues and erosion of agency to improve one's situation in life.

Denying access to care or allowing it to remain a privilege, is not equitable or just. It creates a group of people who do not have resources to be able to be productive members of our society. Please change this by passing HB2002 and allowing us to strive to be the respected parents and professionals we know ourselves to be capable of becoming.

Thank you.