

March 20, 2023

To The House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care:

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 2002 as a licensed clinical psychologist who lives and practices in Oregon. My practice specializes in adult LGBTQ mental health with a focus on transgender clients. This includes assessing for and diagnosing gender dysphoria, and providing therapy as well as writing letters of support for gender affirming surgeries as part of gender affirming behavioral health care. My work also includes supporting clients emotionally through numerous reproductive autonomy decisions, from navigating family planning and fertility treatments, to providing sex education around sexually transmitted infections, the possibility of pregnancy and interactions with gender affirming hormonal and surgical treatments, as well as counseling clients who have decided to terminate pregnancies.

Every major medical and mental healthcare association supports reproductive rights and gender affirming care because medicine and mental healthcare should be based on evidence-based science, not politics. It is clear that the evidence-based science shows that access to reproductive autonomy and gender affirming care lead to better health outcomes, and restricting it leads to severe medical and mental health consequences.

As other states have begun restricting access to reproductive and gender affirming care, I have seen the significant toll on my clients' mental health as they worry that similar measures will come to Oregon, or become national law after the next election. I have seen in my patients the increases in anxiety, depression, and suicidality that come with the fear of these basic medical rights being taken away, as they have already been in so many states. I have also heard numerous Oregon medical and mental health provider colleagues express fear for their businesses, and their basic confidentiality and safety. Gender affirming and reproductive autonomy affirming doctors across the country are being targeted, both by restrictive state laws that demand health care providers put their representative's political beliefs above their medical and mental health training and ethics, and also by the growing number of bad-faith non-state actors determined to intimidate providers into closing shop.

I cannot properly do my job to support my patients' mental health if their basic rights are being taken from them. I cannot do my job to support my patients' mental health if the type of behavioral healthcare I practice is made illegal even though every major medical and mental health association considers it to be ethical and appropriate care. I cannot do my job to support my patients' mental health if I am personally doxxed, attacked, or otherwise targeted for providing ethical and appropriate care. For these reasons, I strongly support the passage of HB 2002, which will enshrine reproductive and gender affirming care into Oregon law, and provide greatly needed confidentiality and legal protections for those of us who provide this necessary care.

Many thanks for considering this vital issue,

Dr. Ari Kramer