

TRAVIS NELSON
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
HOUSE DISTRICT 44
NORTH/NORTHEAST PORTLAND



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Testimony in Support of House Bill 2002

March 20, 2023

Chair Nosse, Vice-Chair Goodwin, and members of the committee,

I am Travis Nelson, State Representative for House District 44 (North and Northeast Portland). I am a Registered Nurse and the first openly LGBTQ+ Black legislator in the 164-year history of our great state. Committee members, I am here today in support of House Bill 2002. This bill would strengthen and expand access to our state's protections around abortion and other reproductive health services, as well as gender-affirming care.

Oregonians who identify as BIPOC, immigrants, low-income, trans and non-binary, and people living in rural areas are at the highest risk of medical complications or lack of access to care if we do not strengthen and expand our access to reproductive health and gender-affirming care. I know that the portion of this bill that pertains to access to abortion and reproductive health services has consumed a lot of the discourse around this bill, so I would like to take a moment to speak first to the other component of the bill that is equally important – gender-affirming care.

As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, I want to stress that access to gender-affirming care – care that aligns one's physical body with one's gender identity – is life-saving care. People who identify as transgender are *nine times* more likely to attempt suicide than cisgender people, according to the National Center for Transgender Equality. However, we have seen that mental health improves dramatically with access to gender-affirming care. Passing HB 2002 would move Oregon forward in the work to destigmatize and expand equitable access to gender-affirming care. In the 2022 election, Oregonians passed Measure 111, letting all of us at the legislature know that they want equitable access to health care for all. The passage of HB 2002 would be a great first step in that direction, and it is one we must take.

Transgender Oregonians are still, to this day, forced to wait *years* for the care they need, and in some cases are unable to afford care that is not covered by their insurance plan. This bill would close those gaps in coverage under the Oregon Health Plan and by private insurers. This will save lives. Washington State enacted very similar legislation in 2021 and to date there has been very little fiscal impact to the state. This is not a burdening of the healthcare system. This is not a budget appropriation. This is expanding essential healthcare to all Oregonians regardless of how they identify or what insurance they have.

As I stated earlier, access to abortion and reproductive health services is critical. Oregon has done much to protect the right to choose, and in the wake of *Roe v Wade* being overturned, it is essential that we strengthen those protections even more. We *must* protect providers who provide reproductive healthcare – such as birth control, family planning, and abortion – from disingenuous civil and criminal liability and recrimination, especially from out-of-state parties and governments. As more and more states put forward draconian anti-abortion laws, Americans will be forced to travel to states like ours to undergo an abortion. Women who travel hundreds of miles for an abortion, especially when it is a necessity in the case of non-viability, life endangerment, or ectopic pregnancy, face many hurdles. There is the cost of travel and lodging, the timing of the procedure, the time off from work and potential loss of pay, and the emotional and physical recovery. And

TRAVIS NELSON
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
HOUSE DISTRICT 44
NORTH/NORTHEAST PORTLAND



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

that doesn't even factor in pain management and recovery in the cases of ectopic pregnancies – which are life-threatening to the woman. Or the trauma and recovery if the pregnancy was the result of rape or incest. These women, and the doctors and nurses performing the abortion, should *not* be subject to criminal prosecution from other states, nor should they have to worry about such a possibility when they already have more than enough to contend with in the moment. It is our duty to protect both patients and providers from other states that seek to overreach their judicial scope.

This bill is the result of many detailed meetings with providers, experts, people who received care, and other work groups to come up with an inclusive and comprehensive piece of legislation. Community organizations and advocates helped us to identify the barriers to patients seeking care, the challenges our healthcare teams are facing, and the potential legal issues and threats patients and providers may face. This bill was designed in direct response to what we heard. To all Oregonians worried about the restriction of abortion and reproductive healthcare access – we are listening. We hear you. We recognize your concerns and fears. And we will not let you down.

Politicians have no place in decisions around reproductive and gender-affirming care. These choices should be up to the person whose body is affected, their confidantes, and their healthcare provider. HB 2002 would ensure that is the case.

Members of the committee, I urge you to pass this bill.

Thank you,

State Representative Travis Nelson
House District 44, North/NE Portland