

Submitter: Emma Thatcher

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2002

Thank you so much for providing the opportunity to submit testimony regarding this bill. I attended part of the hearing on Monday, and listened to rest via the livestream, and while it was difficult to listen to at times I do appreciate the fact that so many folks had the opportunity to be heard. I moved here from California a few years ago and have fallen in love with Oregon - I cannot imagine leaving this state. I really appreciate living somewhere that takes such great effort to provide its residents with so many resources and continues to protect our liberty interests. One thing that shocked me upon moving here was how rural so much of the state is once you live the metro areas. I imagine that so many of these communities suffer from both food and healthcare deserts - which, I believe, is antithetical to our state and federal constitutional rights to be treated equally under the law. I am keenly aware of the privileges I am afforded for living where I do (yesterday, it only took me 8 minutes to drive to a routine doctor appointment). Throughout my life I have struggled with various mental health issues as well as physical illnesses that have all been promptly treated without much economic impact nor any disruptions to my routine. I am just a few months away from graduating from law school, and I can confidently say that were it not for the lack of barriers for me to receive healthcare (geographic, monetary, insurance coverage, etc) I would not be in this position. While so many individuals provided opposition testimony regarding the "harm" that will come to young people because of this bill, I firmly disagree. Providing greater access to gender affirming care and abortion care is the moral, economic, and holistic correct choice. All of these Oregonians are already entitled to so much of what this bill addresses, it merely removes barriers. Removing these barriers can ONLY result in healthier youths - youths who may, like me, go on to graduate from law school thanks to the easy, affordable and quality care they receive. Historically, providing more access to resources to more groups of people have only improved the lives of those impacted and allowed our communities to prosper. I believe that this bill will be beacon for the rest of the country; passing it will demonstrate that Oregon sees the path forward to a more equitable, healthy and prosperous tomorrow.