



April 17, 2024

Senator Regina Birdsell, Chair  
Senate Health and Human Services Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 101  
33 N. State Street  
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Chairwoman Birdsell and Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to HB 1660 relative to coverage of certain procedures for minor children under the state's Medicaid program.

My name is Kristine Stoddard, and I am the Senior Director of New Hampshire Public Policy at Bi-State Primary Care Association. We are a nonprofit organization focused on advancing access to comprehensive primary care and preventive services for all, with special emphasis on those most in need in New Hampshire and Vermont. Our members include community health centers (CHCs), federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), New Hampshire Area Health Education Center programs, clinics for the uninsured, networks, and consortia. Today, Bi-State represents 11 community health centers in New Hampshire that provide comprehensive primary care services to 1 in 14 Granite Staters. Bi-State also runs the state's only non-profit Recruitment Center, which supports practices in their efforts to recruit and retain their full primary care teams.

Bi-State and our members have grave concerns about HB 1660, which prohibits Medicaid insurance plans from covering gender-affirming surgery.

By mission and law, CHCs increase access to primary care by reducing barriers for their patients and are fundamentally opposed to health care policy that strips a patient of their right to access health care services. Medicaid is a crucial payer for our state's transgender and non-binary populations, who experience disproportionately high rates of poverty.<sup>1</sup> It is inevitable that rolling back gender-affirming care, as HB 1660 aims to do, would exacerbate existing disparities faced by transgender populations. And it is inevitable that CHCs, who care for members of New Hampshire's LGBTQ+ community, would be impacted by the physical and mental health consequences that discriminatory policies have on their patients.

This bill not only jeopardizes the health and safety of our LGBT+ citizens; it puts all of us at risk when we allow people outside of the medical community to decide what is considered good medicine. Gender-affirming care, including social, psychological, and medical interventions in support of a person's gender

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<sup>1</sup> The house 2024 appropriations bills: Two steps back for transgender health equity. (n.d.). <https://www.healthaffairs.org/content/forefront/house-2024-appropriations-bills-two-steps-back-transgender-health-equity>

identity, is evidence-based and supported by every major medical association.<sup>2</sup> Like all health care decisions, decisions about gender-affirming care should remain between physicians and the patient and their family, without others inserting themselves into medical decision-making.

HB 1660 is also extremely detrimental from a business perspective. CHCs are key businesses that employ 1,072 Granite Staters, contribute to job creation, and provide products, services, and support in New Hampshire's rural and medically underserved communities. CHCs are often the *only* primary care provider in their area, filling a void for primary care across every county in the Granite State. As we work together to strengthen our state's economy, we ask our elected officials who serve our health centers' districts to oppose policies that further impede their ability to recruit and retain staff. Non-profit CHCs face a host of recruitment and retention challenges, including geographic isolation, staff leaving health care for non-health care jobs, staff departing for higher-paying health care jobs in hospitals and private practices, post-traumatic stress and burnout from ongoing and chronic staffing shortages, and inflation that has put more pressure on staff to seek higher wages elsewhere. Passing HB 1660 and other bills that unfairly and needlessly target LGBTQ+ individuals not only harms marginalized groups, it has a real impact of discouraging young people and families from moving here, at a time when we should be making our state more attractive and welcoming. Discriminatory policies are equally distressing for our LGBTQ+ employees and their families. We have found that our workers want to live in New Hampshire because we treat one another with respect.

We ask you to please stand with us in protecting the rights, lives, and health of LGBTQ+ individuals. By protecting the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals, we protect equality for all.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Kristine E. Stoddard, Esq.  
Director of NH Public Policy  
603-228-2830, ext. 113  
[kstoddard@bistatepca.org](mailto:kstoddard@bistatepca.org)

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<sup>2</sup> GLAAD. (2024b, January 26). Medical Association statements in support of health care for transgender people and youth. GLAAD | GLAAD Rewrites the Script for LGBTQ Acceptance. <https://glaad.org/medical-association-statements-supporting-trans-youth-healthcare-and-against-discriminatory/>