

Dear Rules Coordinator Ms. Maier:

I am a Korean American Immigrant Transgender Woman. I am a software developer at Microsoft and also I am a former Board Chair of Gender Justice League and a former Co-Chair of the Seattle Women's Commission.

Today, I am here as a Transgender Woman who has been medically transitioned while living in Washington State.

I was fortunate enough to have had access to good medical insurance through my work place of Microsoft, and I believe that access to these procedures have been life saving to me.

I have seen my friends and community members struggle with their transition due to lack of coverage of life saving procedures. This pushes them rely on crowd sourcing from others around them who are often also part of the LGBTQ community, engage in sex work or turn to any other means to be able to pay for their own medical care.

Most of the medical procedures that transgender people have to go through fall under these 3 categories.

1. Hormone Replacement Therapy. Hormone Replacement Therapy is often times the most basic parts of transgender people's transition. This is required step in undoing the damage done by having to go through the wrong puberty, or required to ensure transgender adolescents are able to go through the correct puberty.
2. Surgery of Primary Sex Characteristics. While transgender people's bodies should be allowed to exist without the need for surgery, it doesn't change the fact that our society too often defines bodies and gender by genitals. Socially and legally there are many rules and laws that explicitly exclude transgender people based off of having had this surgery. Due societal rules based on misunderstanding of transgender people, not having access to this surgery often results in hardship of being able to form critical relationships in life.
3. Secondary Sex Characteristics. While the first 2 categories do cover a lot of what medical transition is needed, often times it is not enough. If Hormone Replacement Therapy has been started later into transgender adolescence puberty or after all together, often times it is not enough to undo those changes and produce the changes needed. These include but are not limited to,
  - a. Voice therapy for transgender women to be able to speak in a more feminine tone.
  - b. Facial feminization surgery for transgender women to undo the sharper features that grows in their faces due to testosterone.
  - c. Hair removal which reduces or removes facial and body hair in areas that cisgender women generally do not have hair.
  - d. Breast augmentation for transgender women to have breasts that match their cisgender counterparts.
  - e. And breast reductions surgery for transgender men to remove any extra breast tissue
  - f. Hair transplants for transgender women who have male pattern balding.

Most of these procedures, insurance companies consider to be cosmetic, but one of the biggest parts of transgender medical care is to reverse the effects of having to have gone through the

“wrong” puberty as adolescents. How people are treated in society is very much so stemmed from perceived gender, and all of these procedures are needed for transgender people to be able to be treated equally as their cisgender counterparts. These are not only medically necessary, but also life saving, as they help make it possible for transgender people to not have to go through society as second class citizens, which can result in major mental, physical and societal harm.

Thank you for reading my public comment, and I hope this information would have been helpful for you to understanding on why access to all medically necessary procedures is critical for life as a transgender person.

Sincerely,  
Sangyoon (Sophia) Lee