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**Written Testimony on S.37 and H.89 for the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare  
Heather Stein, MD and Rachel Inker, MD  
Community Health Centers  
February 27, 2023**

Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on S.37, an act relating to access to legally protected health care activity and regulation of health care providers. We write in support of S.37 and H.89, especially the provision that defines gender affirming care and includes it as a “legally protected health care activity.” The thoughtful approach taken during the consideration and mark-up of the bill have demonstrated a strong commitment to protecting the highly personal decisions a person makes with their care team about their health and wellness.

The Community Health Centers, with locations across Chittenden and Grand Isle counties, has been a leader in providing a much-needed safe, specialized, and non-judgmental environment for gender diverse Vermonters to access health care services most of us simply take for granted. As a community-based provider of comprehensive primary care, meeting the needs of our patients and supporting members of our communities are paramount. As a safety net provider, we actively reach out to those community members who have been historically disenfranchised from our health care system and connect them with the services fundamental to their health and wellbeing, including gender affirming care.

For almost 20 years, we have personally seen that access to gender affirming health care, including mental health services, is medically necessary and saves lives. Providing quality care is essential when protecting gender diverse people who face multiple barriers to medical and mental health care. As a health care community and state, we support you doing everything possible to ensure access to this medically vulnerable patient population.

While some states are taking steps to limit access to this care or even to make it a felony, we applaud Vermont’s legislature for taking steps that further the state’s commitment to prioritizing patient well-being.

Thank you.

*Dr. Heather Stein, CHC Chief Medical Officer*

*Dr. Rachel Inker, CHC Associate Medical Director and Lead Medical Provider for CHC Gender Affirming Care Clinic*