

My name is Jayla Halling. I am a 23 year old trans woman living in Burlington, Vermont. I moved to Vermont from my hometown in 2021 so that I could transition safely and out from under the thumb of an unaccepting family. Since moving to Vermont, I've started a new life, one where I can live authentically as myself. Although I wasn't born in Vermont, I quickly fell in love with this state, and have decided to make it my permanent home. Many of my closest friends are trans folks who moved to Vermont to escape the wave of crackdowns on trans rights across the country, and Vermont has become a safe haven for the trans community.

Gender affirming care is healthcare, as important as any other healthcare. I cannot emphasize enough that it has saved my life. Prior to my transition, I didn't think I would live to see my 21st birthday. I went from feeling so miserable and out of place with my body that I couldn't even stand to look at myself in a mirror, to being happy and comfortable in my own skin for the first time in my life. Upon receiving gender-affirming care, I felt as though a massive burden was lifted, and I could finally begin to live a life of joy and clarity, free of the gender dysphoria that had tormented me for years. The difference has been night and day.

I am writing to you because I am scared for myself, my transgender girlfriend, and my other trans loved ones. I've felt an intense grief and fear with the new wave of executive orders targeting my community, and how it will affect our lives. I'm scared of how the rhetoric labelling us as 'groomers' and 'freaks' will impact my own safety. All I want is to be able to live my life in peace as myself.

Many of my closest friends are fleeing the country. I am terrified that I will lose access to my life-saving care, and that it is only a matter of time before we are completely legislated from existence.

I am scared that recent actions taken by the Trump administration will lead to medical institutions and insurance companies refusing to provide us with our gender-affirming care, or even providing care for us at all. Mandating coverage in Vermont for gender affirming care will help shield us from the impacts of a federal crackdown.

Placing price restrictions will also help protect the most vulnerable in our community, who otherwise can't afford access to this life-saving care.

I am asking you to support H .55, as a fellow Vermonter and human being, so that Vermont can continue to remain a sanctuary for me and my community. On a deeper level, I'm asking you to reaffirm your commitment to protecting all Vermonters, and to stand up for common decency in the face of this tidal wave of persecution from the federal government. Thank you.

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