

Chairwomen Delegate Kathy Byron
House Commerce and Energy Committee

Emily Marge
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My name is Emily Marge, and I live in Alexandria, Virginia. Polycystic Ovary Syndrome is estimated to affect over 350,000 women in Virginia; I am one of them. I strongly support the passage of HB 806 Health insurance: coverage for Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS). Passage of this bill will substantially impact the care those with PCOS endure.

Having adequate insurance coverage as someone with PCOS is necessary due to the ongoing health complications accompanying this syndrome. I was first diagnosed with PCOS in my undergraduate studies when I was sent to the emergency room for a bladder infection. The ER doctors discovered cysts on my ovaries; I had no idea that was going on in my body. The hairs on my chin that I had been plucking away at my first year of college (hoping nobody would notice) were also a symptom of PCOS; something I didn't know until I received my diagnosis. To this day, seeing the excess hair growth on my chin, cheeks, and arms still affects my mental health - the anxiety of wondering if I missed a spot and someone will see it on Zoom. Many patients, including myself, have spent thousands of dollars over the years on facial hair-removal treatments and on therapy copays to help minimize the shame making me feel less like a woman. Passage of this bill will help cover the cost and release the burden of worrying about my hair issues.

It was not until I moved to Virginia that my PCOS symptoms affected other parts of my body besides my reproductive system. I'm eternally grateful for the care and help from my healthcare providers team I have made since moving to Virginia in 2018. My primary care physician, endocrinologist, therapist, and nutritionist are essential in my care to make sure my body is doing the right thing; to be healthy and manage PCOS. However, there is always a worry in the back of my mind, will my health insurance cover the recommended treatments my providers want for me? Will the co-payments become overbearing? These past two years, my endocrinologist discovered my liver enzymes were high, an abnormal EKG, hypertension, and being in the top range of Type 2 diabetes. For someone in their early twenties, receiving this notice and knowing all of these related to comorbidities due to PCOS was overwhelming and is becoming a cost burden. There was a time early on in the pandemic when I had to choose between paying for therapy and nutrition co-payments over buying the book I needed for my graduate studies. My team of doctors wants me to manage my PCOS symptoms early on so, in the future, I can live longer and maybe not have to take five medications for the rest of my life. Health insurances covering nutrition, skin and hair issues, type 2 diabetes management prevention, and other lifestyle interventions for managing PCOS will help lessen the burden.

Having support from my healthcare providers to manage and prevent any other health issues related to PCOS is not enough; I need insurance payers' help too. I urge you to vote in favor of bill HB 806; this will help the estimated 350,000 women in Virginia benefit from these pioneering updates to insurances covering necessary medical coverage.

In good health,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Emily M. Marge". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Emily Marge, M.P.S.