



For Immediate Release

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Amida Care Responds to Suicide of Trans Teen Haley Gabriella Feldmann, Calling for Access to Gender-Affirming Care

New York, NY (December 30, 2021) -- Amida Care, New York's largest Medicaid Special Needs managed care Plan serving over 2,100 people of trans experience, released the following statement from President and CEO Doug Wirth in response to the suicide of transgender teen Haley Gabriella Feldmann. After her passing, [Feldmann's family spoke out](#) about factors that contributed to her depression, including health insurers denying coverage of gender-affirming medical care and transphobic legislation aimed to restrict access to care.

"Our hearts go out to the family and friends of Haley Gabriella Feldmann and everyone grieving her loss. This tragedy underscores the discrimination people of transgender and gender non-conforming experience face at every turn – in education, employment, housing, health care and health insurance. Haley's family said that the hoops they had to jump through to try and get their health insurance to cover gender-affirming procedures contributed to her despair. Medically necessary gender-affirming surgeries, such as facial feminization surgery and breast augmentations, are often categorized as 'cosmetic' by insurance companies, and aren't covered. For many people of transgender experience, these procedures are a matter of life and death. We need to make sure they are accessible to all who need them."

"As Zil Goldstein, Associate Medical Director for TGNB Care at Callen-Lorde Community Health Center wrote in a recent [op-ed](#): 'Put yourself in the shoes of someone who knows what surgery they need, but has to fight for months to find a surgeon and get insurance approval—all while continuing to experience heightened anxiety, depression, and distress in a body that has the wrong parts.' [A report](#) released earlier this year from The Trevor Project found that over half of transgender and gender non-conforming youth contemplate suicide."

"Amida Care is breaking new ground in promoting access to gender-affirming care. Amida Care serves over 2,100 transgender members, representing over 20% of our membership, and we work closely with culturally-competent providers to ensure that TGNC members get the care they need without avoidable delay. By providing access to gender-affirming care, designing comprehensive wraparound services, training staff, having an expansive network of providers with experience caring for transgender patients, and understanding the complex interplay between body image and mental health, health insurers can engage transgender people in the full continuum of care and improve overall health outcomes."

"Health insurers have an obligation to their members to adopt a more sophisticated understanding of mental and physical health—going beyond inadequate distinctions such as 'medically necessary' vs. 'cosmetic' procedures. Lives depend on it."

Amida Care Inc. is a not-for-profit health plan that specializes in providing comprehensive health coverage and coordinated care to New Yorkers with complex conditions, including HIV and behavioral health disorders, and people who are of transgender experience or homeless (regardless of HIV status). Amida Care has a wide network of health care providers throughout New York City and is the largest Medicaid Special Needs Health Plan (SNP) in New York State. For more information, visit www.amidacareny.org.