

## **HB 361 SUPPORT**

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### **Certificates of Birth - Issuance of New Certificates - Sex Designation (Birth Certificate Modernization Act)**

House of Delegates Committee on Health and Government Operations  
Tuesday, February 21, 2023 at 1:00pm

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk, Vice Chair Kelly, and members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee,

My name is Kellen Sweeney. I live in Baltimore City with my husband and two-year-old son. I work as a health policy consultant to the federal government when I am not busy with my favorite job – being Teagan’s mama. Last year, I filed to legally change my name to better reflect my transgender nonbinary gender identity. I am in support of House Bill 361.

All Marylanders should have access to accurate government-issued identification documents. These are used in countless financial, health care, benefits, and other transactions on a daily basis. As a parent, I regularly need to produce documents proving my own identity and my relationship to my child.

Government-issued identification works differently for me simply because I am transgender. Because I legally changed my name after giving birth to my son, the name on my driver’s license does not match the name on his birth certificate, meaning I cannot use his birth certificate to prove my parentage for official purposes like applying for his passport.

There is no clear process for remediating the situation. I could not find guidance on the state Division of Vital Records website for how to correct the name of a parent due to a name change; I tried to make an appointment, but it was not clear which type of appointment I needed to request. I just have to show up and hope that whoever I end up talking to is willing to find a creative solution to navigate this scenario. Accessing core government services like accurate identification documents should not be left to individual staff discretion.

By contrast, my ability to obtain an accurate driver's license was simple. The MVA website clearly indicated that the option was available, how to make the appropriate appointment, and what documentation I needed to bring. The MVA staff were trained on the process, the systems were updated to collect and update the information for this scenario – it worked the way a common government service should. This is because this House passed legislation to make those expectations clear to the agency.

The Maryland General Assembly should pass HB 361 to make these expectations clear regarding updating birth certificates to accurately reflect a parent's legal name change. Transgender Marylanders and their families deserve the same access to accurate government-issued identification as any other Marylanders.