

My name is Kathy Conneally. I am a member of the LGBTQ+ community. I am your constituent.

I have to tell you a story about my children - because their birth certificates are different, which creates a stigma for my daughter.

My children have the same parents. They were both legally adopted. THERE SHOULD NOT BE THE NEED FOR FURTHER EXPLANATION as they go through lives, using their birth certificates, into adulthood.

There have been efforts in this country and in certain states, to invalidate an "altered or amended" birth certificate. My daughter's birth certificate is STILL labeled "amended" even after previous law changes were supposed to have "fixed" the issue, in Maryland.

My children did nothing wrong and their birth certificate should be a validation for them - not a tool to use to discriminate against them. ALL CHILDREN should be issued EQUALLY VALID birth certificates from my home state of Maryland.

Here are their stories.

Jason – Started life as my nephew (born in 2006 to my brother and his wife). He was abused and neglected for almost 5 years. Finally, his parents went to jail. We got temporary custody and spent 9 years simultaneously helping him heal and grow, while also battling his parents who, from their jail cells, were successful in trying to bankrupt me with legal bills, in our fight for adoption. 9 years of him having to explain his last name to people. 9 years of having to explain we were legal guardians, in the place of parents. 9 years of listing him as "nephew" on our tax return. We finally won in 2020, the adoption was final this past March. Because of COVID-19, we did not receive his birth certificate until October. His birth certificate:

1. Lists his new last name, as it should. His name was changed, as part of the court order approving his adoption in March, when he was 13 years old
2. States my husband and me, by our first and last name (no middle name), as "Parents"
3. States our age as 38 and 37, which was our age in 2006 (Jason's year of birth).
4. States his county of birth as Harford County, which was where he was born to my brother. We have never lived in Harford County, as parents.

That is it. He can go anywhere with this certificate and no one will ask him any questions about his past. No one in any state anywhere can get ammunition from this certificate, about him or his parents, to use against him or to invalidate his document in any way. There is nothing there. **The things that appear "untrue" on his certificate** (i.e. that we have never lived in Harford County as parents, or that we were not in our 30's when we became his parents, or that he was not born a Conneally) **will never be challenged, solely because of his birth certificate!!** That is the security that he needed, that was provided by adoption. That is the point of issuing his new birth certificate.

I started with my son, so that you could see the difference. Here is my daughter's story:

Maya - Born in 2003 to myself and to my partner, who, at the time, was assumed by all to be a woman. A father was not listed on her paperwork, because I used a donor from my partner's family, to have this baby. So she was born "biologically related" to both of her parents. We executed a legal Second parent adoption, as was planned during the pregnancy, within months of our daughter's birth. She is both biologically and legally our daughter, and was born that way.

* THE BIRTH CERTIFICATE ISSUED BY THE STATE IN 2003 HAD TYPED "XXXXX" OVER THE WORD "FATHER" AND THEN TYPED "MOTHER" IN A BLANK SPACE* A clearly "altered" birth certificate. Because of the advocacy (in which we have participated for many years) of the LGBTQ+ community, rules at the Division of Vital Records were eventually changed from 2003, so that birth certificates now simply list "Parent" and "Parent." Great!

However, before we could take advantage of this victory and secure an "unaltered" birth certificate for our daughter, my partner came to terms with his depression and his dysphoria, and came out as transgender. We could not focus on the birth certificate at that time, because we were immersed in this new journey of deep self (and family) understanding and re-imagining.

He had gender confirmation surgery in 2012. Because of the advocacy (in which we have participated for many years) of the LGBTQ+ Community, there was a path in MD which he could follow, to:

- Change his middle name (from Anne to Aleksander) by expedited court order
- Legally correct his driver's license
- Legally correct his gender marker at the Social Security Administration
- File a "waiver" with the Armed Forces, for not having registered for the draft on his 18th birthday. (Otherwise, as a male, he would be ineligible for certain federal funds, like student loans.)

Because he was born on the U.S. Military base in Okinawa, his birth certificate runs through the state department and we had to go through DC to get that corrected. His VALID birth certificate, issued from the STATE DEPARTMENT, simply states his current name, his birth date, that he was born male, and that he is a U.S. citizen. NO NOTATION; no asterisk, no amendment nor caveat. Thank you Secretary Clinton, who put this process in place, during her time as Secretary of State.

From there he was able to get a Passport that identifies him correctly. **He was able to adopt our son without having to disclose or discuss his sexuality or previous gender dysphoria. Good!**

On November 9, 2016, I suddenly realized my daughter still had a horrifically altered birth certificate, and rushed to order a new one, before the terrifying inauguration on 1/20/2017. I noted that the "Parent" and "Parent" was correct and filed it away, still in the envelope.

Once my son's adoption was complete, and I received his new birth certificate in 2020, I pulled both certificates out, to begin the process of ordering passports, for the children. That is when I first noticed, on the bottom of my daughter's new birth certificate, that she had an "AMENDED" NOTATION on the face?!?! How is this possible?

My husband had to disclose his middle name change to Vital Records, to correct my daughter's birth certificate in 2016, because the 2nd Parent Adoption in 2003 listed his former (Anne).

But our middle names are not even listed on my son's birth certificate. This may be a local Harford versus Baltimore County thing. But again, being born in Baltimore County should not be a STIGMA to my daughter, forcing her to disclose this convoluted family history every time she tries to use her "amended" birth certificate, during her lifetime.

THIS IS A STIGMA. She has a fear of questions, and that fear is something that will prevent her from trying. FOREVER - even when we (her parents) are deceased, and especially when we can no longer fight for her, or help her navigate any potential perils.

She will have to wonder about each state's laws pertaining to "amended" birth certificates, before she drives through them. What if there was an accident. Can you imagine, in the middle of a medical emergency, having a state law invalidate your identity? This could cause a delay, while you are frantically seeking medical treatment, aid, or access to benefits like an ambulance. Perhaps a state may use this technicality to invalidate your health insurance coverage. Or to bar access to one or both of your parents, if you are a minor. One day it might be used to bar her access to her own children, in another state. Will she even be able to get a passport these days, with an "amended" birth certificate? These are the fears that we adults, in the LGBTQ+ community had lived with for decades. But today WE ADULTS have valid documents! **My daughter will carry this legacy of fears, and possible repercussions, for what crime?! For the rest of her life. WHY???**

She was simply born, into the home of 2 loving parents, with whom she has lived and grown, for 17 years now. She has done NOTHING wrong, controversial or discussion worthy (THE SAME AS OUR SON) when it comes to the public's "right to know" (or not) about their origins.

But anyone who chooses, can use her birth certificate to INVALIDATE her identity. They are given PRIMA FACIA "just cause" to do so, at their pleasure, if they so choose. They can demand her original birth certificate, and she will not be able to provide that.

The state of Maryland is STILL, 17 years later, putting my daughter at risk! She is in the position of being either A) UNDOCUMENTED or B) Outing her father (and subsequently at risk for all of the implications that being involuntarily "outed" carry.) This is UNACCEPTABLE.

The state has the responsibility to validate my daughter's individual personhood, with the document that it issues, ON THE FACE OF THAT ISSUED DOCUMENT, without the need for the 3 pages of explanation that I have had to provide (and that you have had to read) today.

Respectfully,
Kathleen Conneally
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