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Monday, February 21, 2022

**Written Testimony Favorable to HB0370: Certificates of Birth – Issuance of New
Certificates – Sex Designation**

Delegate Pendergrass, Chair, Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk Vice-Chair, and esteemed members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

My name is Ezra Towne, and my pronouns are they/them/theirs. I write to you as a Montgomery County advocate and activist, transmasculine nonbinary person, and a parent. I submit this favorable testimony today for HB0370. This legislation would establish a consistent process throughout the state when requesting a name and/or gender change on Maryland issued birth certificates. **I fully support HB0370 as written, and ask for a favorable report without amendments.**

I am personally invested in this bill as a transgender parent who has gone through a legal name change. My two children have different names for me on their birth certificates. My 14 year old daughter, Elsie, was born in 2008, and I had not yet completed a legal name change. My 9 year old, Leo, was born nearly 5 years later after my legal name change was complete. In the process of completing the second parent adoption of Leo, I asked our family lawyer about updating my name on Elsie's birth certificate. I was told that it was complicated, and that there was no established way to do so.

If passed, this bill would be a huge relief to my and my family. It would prevent me from being outed as trans when doing anything that involves my daughter's birth certificate. Today, birth certificates are required to enroll in school, add a child to your insurance plan, and to get a passport. My driver's license, social security card, insurance information, and all other state issued identification papers show my current name: Ezra MacLeod Towne.

I already carry my court ordered name change around with me when I travel through the U.S., just in case I find myself in a situation where my name may be questioned. I should not have to do so in the first place - that is why I went through the legal name change process. But the last place I want to have to reveal my name change is when doing things that require my daughter's birth certificate. Word travels, as much as we may pretend that it doesn't. My daughter should not have to risk being bullied, teased, poked fun at, or called out as different because of my transgender identity from the start. She is affected enough already due to my role as an out transgender activist.

EZRA MACLEOD TOWNE

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There are also other reasons why this bill is essential - for both transgender and cisgender* people:

- Adults may choose to change their names legally when estranged from family and/or former spouses due to physical, emotional, and/or financial abuse.
- Adults who divorce their child's other parent in amicably for similar reasons may also want to change their child's name.
- Parents may seek updated birth certificates to show the correct name and gender for their trans and/or nonbinary child.
- Any one who legally changes their gender on their driver's license, passport, and other government issued identification will have a clear path in order to do so – and it would bring the gender change on birth certificates in line with all other government identification issued in the state of Maryland. This would also include an X gender marker.

Currently, the Division of Vital Records, has no established procedure regarding these sorts of birth certificate changes, and individual employees are left to make their own judgement calls when determining how to handle them.

HB0370 also eliminates additional expense and time burdens imposed upon individuals seeking a new birth certificate. Transgender people would no longer be required to provide costly, and very personal, medical proof of their gender transition. Instead, just like the recently passed driver's license identification, individuals can self-attest under penalty of perjury.

Out of consideration for the mental and physical health, as well as the equitable treatment of both transgender and cisgender people seeking name and/or gender changes on their birth certificates, **I urge you to issue a favorable report, without amendments, for HB0370: Certificates of Birth – Issuance of New Certificates – Sex Designation.**

Sincerely,



Mx. Ezra Towne
District 18, Wheaton