

## Testimony of the Human Trafficking Prevention Project

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**BILL NO:** Senate Bill 314  
**TITLE:** Certificates of Birth, Licenses, and Identification Cards – Sex Designation (Birth Certificate Modernization Act)  
**COMMITTEE:** Health & Government Operations  
**HEARING DATE:** February 6, 2025  
**POSITION:** **FAVORABLE**

Senate Bill 314 would bring gender marker policies at the Maryland Department of Health Vital Statistics Administration in line with those issued by other state agencies, easing the administrative burden for those Marylanders seeking to access a new birth certificate in the state. The Human Trafficking Prevention Project supports this bill because it will make it easier for transgender and gender non-conforming people to obtain identity documents that match their gender identity. This small change will greatly reduce the stigma they face, which, in turn, reduces their risk of being trafficked.

Efforts at raising public awareness about the crime of human trafficking commonly ignores the impact that gender identity has on a person's vulnerability to trafficking. The reality is that [transgender and gender non-conforming persons are put at disproportionately higher risk of exploitation](#) because of the discrimination and isolation that they so often face, which commonly translates into the hallmarks of heightened trafficking risk including sexual assault, financial instability, homelessness, and drug addiction. One of the primary forms of discrimination that transgender and gender non-conforming people face is the consequences that come with showing identification carrying a gender marker that does not match the person's lived gender experience.

Having to produce this type of identification essentially "outs" a transgender or gender non-conforming person in any situation where they need to show their identification, such as while traveling, applying for jobs or educational opportunities, entering certain public establishments, or obtaining benefits that require proof of identity. As detailed in chapter six of the [Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey](#), this can further expose trans- and gender non-conforming people to a variety of problematic and often dangerous outcomes, such as unnecessary scrutiny by law enforcement, denial of housing, employment, healthcare or public benefits, verbal harassment, and physical violence. Experiences like these typically drive affected individuals into isolation, which is why so many people transgender and gender non-conforming people exist on the margins of society where they face a far greater risk of exploitation.

In recent years, Maryland has begun to show its support for *preventing* human trafficking by addressing the societal challenges that make Marylanders more vulnerable to being trafficked. SB 314 would further this goal by reducing the stigma that transgender and gender non-

conforming persons face every time they are asked to produce their identification documents, which would, in turn, affirm the humanity of these individuals and make them less vulnerable to the ills that so commonly precede a trafficking experience. **For these reasons, the Human Trafficking Prevention Project supports Senate Bill 314, and respectfully urges a favorable report.**

***[The Human Trafficking Prevention Project](#) is dedicated to ending the criminalization of sex workers and survivors of human trafficking through access to civil legal services and support for policies that dismantle harmful systems and increase access to basic human rights and legal relief.***

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