

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 361 – Birth Certificate Modernization Act

February 3, 2025

TO: Chair Beidle, Chair Smith, and members of the Senate Finance & Judicial Proceedings Committees

I write today in strong support of HB 361, the Birth Certificate Modernization Act, which will bring Maryland's birth certificate policies in line with the procedures for other documents, ensuring all Marylanders can access accurate, affirming identity documents without unnecessary administrative barriers.

As a psychiatric nurse practitioner, I regularly work with transgender and nonbinary clients navigating systems that were not built with them in mind. Birth certificates are foundational documents that impact access to healthcare, employment, housing, and even parental rights. When identity documents fail to reflect a person's lived reality, it forces them to repeatedly disclose private information, exposing them to discrimination, undue scrutiny, and legal complications. Additionally, since no other ID documents in Maryland require a medical provider's verification to self-attest gender, it is unreasonable for this document to continue requiring such involvement.

Maryland already allows self-selection of gender markers on driver's licenses and state IDs, yet birth certificate policies remain inconsistent. HB 361 will:

- Allow transgender parents to prove their legal relationship to their children after a name change.
- Clarify that an "X" gender marker is a valid option, aligning Maryland with 16 states and Washington, D.C.
- Reduce administrative burdens for transgender individuals, particularly those with limited financial resources or without an affirming medical provider.

This bill is a matter of privacy, safety, and dignity. Having accurate identity documents is not just about personal affirmation—it's about ensuring that transgender Marylanders are recognized equally under the law, without barriers that cisgender individuals do not face. In the political climate we are living in, this act also serves to protect Marylanders from the rapidly changing vicissitudes of a

hostile federal administration. It's more important than ever that our values are clearly reflected in state laws.

Importantly, this bill does not alter medical standards of care, impact school sports participation, or change policies for incarcerated individuals. It simply provides a pathway for Marylanders to access birth certificates that reflect who they are.

Passing HB 361 means removing bureaucratic barriers that create unnecessary harm. I urge the committee to vote in favor of HB 361 to ensure Maryland's policies reflect the needs and realities of all its residents.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
Jess Romeo, PMHNP-BC