

**Testimony Favorable to SB0314:  
Certificates of Birth, Licenses, and Identification Cards - Sex Designation  
(Birth Certificate Modernization Act)**

February 5, 2025

Senator Pamela Beidle, Chair, Senator Antonio Hayes, Vice-Chair, and esteemed members of the Finance Committee:

My name is Emily Shaw and my pronouns are she/her. I'm a resident of Montgomery County, wife, and parent. As someone who knows how critical having accurate official documents can be for accessing services and rights, I believe it is discriminatory and unfair to hinder people from correcting their government documentation to match their identity. I therefore strongly support SB0314 and am seeking your committee's favorable report without amendments.

As someone who works in data management, I've had a view into how our official personally identifying information can help or harm us unexpectedly. Even small documentation differences - a name that has an accented letter in one place but not another, an inconsistently recorded compound last name - can result in lost applications, delayed benefits, and lost time. When the documentation difference is more substantial, as is the case where a parent or birth certificate holder has changed their name or public gender presentation, the consequences can be much more serious. My transgender friends, colleagues and neighbors can face substantial obstacles when they can't easily obtain accurate birth certificates for their children or themselves.

In Montgomery County, in order for a parent to register their child for school they are asked to show a birth certificate. The birth certificate confirms both their child's age and the child's relationship to their parent, enabling the county to link the child's district residency status to their parent's. It is possible to find a way around using a birth certificate through additional cost and legal process. But clearly, the birth certificate is the central form of proof of belonging of the child to the parent, and all the resources and benefits that come with that relationship.

Meanwhile, for the individual owning the birth certificate, that document is also our country's fundamental statement of their American citizenship. For people who change their name or documented gender, there are increasingly serious consequences for having mismatched identity documents. Having an inaccurate birth certificate can cause serious complications in hiring. Similarly, the 2024 SAVE Act is likely to be brought back again this year. If made law, it will bar people across the US from voting unless they show proof of citizenship - which, if you lack a passport, will be a driver's license plus birth certificate. Mismatched birth certificate information in this case will cause the loss of a fundamental right.

Bureaucratic records and the systems that hold them have a significant impact on the daily practice of our lives. Marylanders deserve a clear way to update to their birth certificates in order to prevent the serious consequences of inaccuracies in this key official document. I respectfully ask for a favorable report on S0314 -the Birth Certificate Modernization Act- from the Finance Committee.