

**FAVORABLE SUPPORT
FOR
Certificates of Birth, Licenses, and Identification Cards
– *Sex Designation (Birth Certificate Modernization Act)*
(SB 314)**

February 3, 2025

The Honorable Pamela Beidle
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building, Room 241
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Beidle–

I am writing to support Senate Bill (SB) 314 – *Certificates of Birth, Licenses, and Identification Cards – Sex Designation (Birth Certificate Modernization Act)*. Specifically, I am writing to echo the comments of my sibling-in-law, attached to this letter.

The lack of clarity around updating government-issued identification in Maryland, specifically birth certificates, has caused my sibling-in-law countless hours of physical and emotional stress and harm. Guidance on updating records should be clear for all Marylanders; however, without the passing of SB 314, Marylander’s transgender citizens lack the same access to this clarity.

Although such a law should be a simple, administrative change, it is even more necessary now – transgender Marylanders should not have to endure more psychological and physical pain in the midst of growing hostility both outside our borders and from the federal government. I am proud of the safe-haven my state is for my sibling-in-law and their child, and I implore you to make it that much safer and easier by allowing them a concise and consistent path for updating their records.

For these reasons, I firmly support SB 314. Thank you for your consideration.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Ellis', written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nichole Ellis Sweeney
District 18
Kensington, Maryland

Attachment

My name is Kellen Sweeney. I live in Baltimore City with my husband and four-year-old child. I work as a health policy consultant to the federal government when I am not busy with my favorite job – being Teagan’s mama. Two years ago, I filed to legally change my name to better reflect my transgender nonbinary gender identity. I am in support of Senate Bill 361.

All Marylanders should have access to accurate government-issued identification documents. These are used in countless financial, health care, benefits, and other transactions on a daily basis. As a parent, I regularly need to produce documents proving my own identity and my relationship to my child.

Government-issued identification works differently for me simply because I am transgender. Because I legally changed my name after giving birth to my child, the name on my driver’s license does not match the name on their birth certificate, meaning I cannot use their birth certificate to prove my parentage for official purposes like applying for his passport.

There is no clear process for remediating the situation. I could not find guidance on the state Division of Vital Records website for how to correct the name of a parent due to a name change; I tried to make an appointment, but it was not clear which type of appointment I needed to request. I just have to show up and hope that whoever I end up talking to is willing to find a creative solution to navigate this scenario. Accessing core government services like accurate identification documents should not be left to individual staff discretion.

By contrast, my ability to obtain an accurate driver’s license was simple. The MVA website clearly indicated that the option was available, how to make the appropriate appointment, and what documentation I needed to bring. The MVA staff were trained on the process, the systems were updated to collect and update the information for this scenario – it worked the way a common government service should. This is because this House passed legislation to make those expectations clear to the agency.

The Maryland General Assembly should pass SB 361 to make these expectations clear regarding updating birth certificates to accurately reflect a parent’s legal name change. Transgender Marylanders and their families deserve the same access to accurate government-issued identification as any other Marylanders.