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2/19/2025

**TESTIMONY in SUPPORT of HB1368 Certificates of Birth, Licenses, and Identification Cards - Sex Designation (Birth Certificate Modernization Act)**

TO: Chair Pena-Melnyk and members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Abbie M. Ellicott, for the Coalition for LGBTQ+ Students

My name is Abbie Ellicott, I live in Anne Arundel County and I represent the Coalition for LGBTQ+ Students. I am writing to indicate my strong **SUPPORT for HB1368**, or the Birth Certificate Modernization Act.

I support this bill because it is an Important step in protecting the civil rights, safety and well-being of transgender people in Maryland, by removing unnecessary barriers to modifying one's gender designation on official documents.

Changing a birth certificate gender marker is an important part of gender affirmation for transgender people. Having a gender marker that corresponds with one's gender identity lowers the risk of harassment, discrimination, and negative health outcomes. Changing a gender designation on official documents is essential for transgender people because it means their official IDs will accurately reflect their legal identity. It is often required to obtain other legal documents. When an official gender marker does not match a person's gender identity, this can lead to discrimination in areas including medical care, legal proceedings, employment, housing and social stigma. It also has an adverse impact on the transgender person's psychological state and overall safety, as it makes them more vulnerable to harassment, trauma and marginalization.

Research from Brown University School of Public Health shows that legal gender marker and name change is associated with lower negative responses to gender-based mistreatment and better mental health outcomes among trans populations. Experts on trans health and human rights point out that possessing an accurate government ID is often necessary to access healthcare, housing, education and employment and these are resources from which trans people continue to be excluded and denied access.

There are many practical reasons to support this bill. It makes no sense to require that transgender people get a physician's statement to make this modification. Being transgender is not a medical condition, so a physician's statement should not be needed. This antiquated requirement places an unfair burden on the transgender person, who is already navigating huge hurdles in obtaining medical care. It puts a burden on medical providers who are already too busy and creates more financial stress for the transgender person.

Some lawmakers want to deny the existence of transgender people. All over the country, lawmakers including our current President, want to erase the rights and identities of transgender citizens. They do not accept that transgender people have existed since the beginning of time and will not disappear or be intimidated into silence. We should not make life harder for transgender people. HB1368 removes barriers for transgender members in our community and conveys respect and acceptance for them as human beings who (like all of us) simply want to live their lives with dignity.

**For all these reasons, legal gender affirmation is critically important and should be easily accessible for all transgender citizens in Maryland. Please support HB1368.**

Sincerely,  
Abbie M. Ellicott and  
the Coalition for LGBTQ+ Students