

SHORE PRIDE ALLIANCE LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

Bill: **SB626 Birth Certificate Modernization Act**

Organization: Shore Pride Alliance., PO Box 5107, Salisbury Maryland 21802

Submitted by: Nicole Hollywood, Board Member

Position: **FAVORABLE**

This testimony in FAVOR of the Birth Certificate Modernization Act is being submitted on behalf of Shore Pride Alliance, formerly PFLAG Salisbury, an organization dedicated to supporting, educating, and advocating for LGBTQIA+ people and their families.

Gender identity is a person's conception of being male, female, both, fluid, or neither, which may or may not be the same as what their sex was assigned at birth with 5.1% of adults under 30 identify as transgender or nonbinary.

Changing gender markers on legal documents is important and life affirming for transgender, non-binary, and intersex individuals because it allows them to accurately reflect their gender identity, which can significantly improve their mental health, reduce the risk of discrimination, and affirm their self-perception, essentially providing a vital step towards living authentically as themselves.

Conversely, **having an inaccurate gender marker can lead to challenges in accessing services, potential safety concerns, and feelings of invalidation.**

Because accurate and consistent gender markers on identity documents help individuals identifying under the transgender umbrella gain access to public spaces and resources it is crucial for them to be able to fully participate in all aspects of society. Further, legal gender marker and name change is associated with lower negative emotional response to gender-based mistreatment and improved mental health outcomes among trans populations.

Here in Maryland, the Maryland Commission for LGBTQIA+ Affairs conducted the first ever comprehensive state-wide needs assessment of LGBTQIA+ Marylanders. With approximately 1300 respondents, we found that nearly 25% of respondents changed their legal name while living in Maryland with many reporting the process as difficult citing barriers to obtaining updated identity documents, affecting access to employment, housing, health care, and safety.

The bill under consideration will streamline processes and remove unnecessary and burdensome requirements. Further, **these actions are consistent with the recommendations of major medical, advocacy, and legal organizations.**

This bill will also help transgender parents prove they are related to their own children after they have been granted an order of legal name change through the Maryland Courts and ease the administrative burden of accessing accurate documents for the transgender community, particularly low-income transgender people.

References

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