

I'm am testifying to support a FAVORABLE report on SB 0626, the Birth Certificate Modernization Act

I run a support group for transgender adults, and am a witness to the struggles faced by transgender Marylanders trying to live an authentic life. There are numerous hassles associated with gender transition. Some are necessary, but others are state-imposed and can easily be eliminated.

One of these easily fixable issues is the requirement to present documentation from a healthcare provider for a simple change to gender on a Maryland birth certificate. It creates problems for several reasons:

1. It places a burden on healthcare providers and patients. Healthcare providers are drawn away from their important job of providing healthcare, and patients are required to make an appointment to get their documentation produced. These appointments may not be covered by insurance, incurring an expense on people who have so many other financial obligations.
2. The rules as to who may provide this documentation and what form it must take are confusing and, in many cases, arbitrary. Some types of providers are permitted to give it, others aren't. If a patient's provider is not one of those types, they have to go on an expensive and time-consuming hunt to find one who is. Providers themselves do not have the time to dig into arcane rules to obtain this information, so there are occasions when what they provide is insufficient.
3. The rules only allow for male and female as genders, which forces non-binary Marylanders, who identify neither as a male or female, to misgender themselves on government documentation.
4. Transgender people who have not obtained transition-related medical care are frozen out of having accurate documentation. There are many reasons why someone might transition without medical care. Some are not healthy enough to take hormones or undergo any of the gender confirming surgeries, and others are simply happy with their bodies as they are. This violates the principle of equal protection.
5. State-sponsored requirements that transgender people provide medical documentation to have their transitions recognized perpetuates the public misconception that being trans is a disease and that transitioning gender is something transgender people cannot be trusted to do on their own and must be supervised. Like anyone else, transgender people do not need medical permission to be members of their gender.
6. Perhaps most importantly, it is an unnecessary bureaucratic step. The doctor's input adds nothing to the information received by the state. Doctors don't know transgender people's gender any better than the state does. The doctor just takes the transgender person's word for it.

For these reasons, I hope you will take the steps in your power to eliminate this requirement by giving SB0626 a FAVORABLE report.