

TESTIMONY in SUPPORT of SB626 (HB1589) Certificates of Birth, Licenses, and Identification Cards - Sex Designation (Birth Certificate Modernization Act) Senate Hearing on 2/25/26

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

We represent the Coalition for LGBTQ+ Students, which is a grassroots organization in Anne Arundel County that supports LGBTQ+ youth through advocacy, policy and education. We strongly **SUPPORT SB626** -- the Birth Certificate Modernization Act.

This bill 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. It also makes it easier for parents to update their children's names on birth certificates, which can be necessary in situations involving victims of crime, domestic violence, and child abuse.

Changing a birth certificate gender marker is an essential aspect 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 important for transgender people because it means their official IDs 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.

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 barriers to obtaining medical care. It puts a burden on medical providers who are already too busy. Doctors are likely to charge a patient for providing a physician's statement; this creates more financial stress for the transgender person.

Currently, transgender people are terrified and for good reason. The rights of transgender people are under enormous attack. Access to gender affirming health care is being systematically destroyed, transgender soldiers have been banned from serving in the military and have lost retirement benefits, and transgender people across the United States are being scapegoated, vilified and pathologized. Many people, including our elected officials, want to eradicate 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. SB626 removes barriers for transgender citizens in Maryland 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 SB626.

The Coalition for LGBTQ+ Students
www.coalition4lgbtqstudents.org