



**Maryland Commission
on LGBTQIA+ Affairs**

Bill Title: Certificates of Birth, Licenses, and Identification Cards - Sex Designation (Birth Certificate Modernization Act)

Bill Number(s): [HB1589/SB0626](#)

Position: FAVORABLE

Date: February 23, 2026

Submitted by: Jeremy Browning, Director of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

To:

Senate Finance Committee

The Hon. Pamela Beidle, Chair
The Hon. Antonio Hayes, Vice Chair

Testimony on behalf of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs:

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs, created by the Maryland General Assembly, works to serve LGBTQIA+ Marylanders by galvanizing community voices, researching and addressing challenges, and advocating for policies that advance equity and inclusion. The Commission envisions a Maryland where all LGBTQIA+ people can live full and authentic lives. As a vital resource, the Commission collaborates with public officials, agencies, and community partners to ensure the rights and dignity of LGBTQIA+ Marylanders are protected and respected.

On behalf of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs, we strongly support House Bill 1589/Senate Bill 626, the Birth Certificate Modernization Act. This bill is a top priority for the Commission and represents a crucial step toward ensuring dignity, equity, and inclusion for transgender, nonbinary, and intersex individuals in Maryland.

This bill addresses long-standing barriers by streamlining processes for amending sex designations on birth certificates, licenses, and identification cards. It removes medically unnecessary and burdensome requirements, such as proof of surgery or other medical interventions, that many individuals cannot access or do not want. These requirements also place unnecessary administrative demands on an already strained healthcare system, requiring providers to spend valuable time completing paperwork rather than delivering care. By

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100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032

simplifying this process and allowing self-attestation under penalty of perjury, the bill aligns Maryland with best practices and creates a consistent standard across state agencies.

Importantly, the Birth Certificate Modernization Act will also reduce administrative burden and costs for the State. By eliminating unnecessary clinical visits solely for documentation, the bill reduces avoidable Medicaid expenditures and streamlines agency workflows. In addition, the legislation allows existing forms to continue to be used, minimizing implementation and printing costs.

House Bill 1589/Senate Bill 626 also introduces an option to list “X” for sex designations, which is vital for Marylanders who do not identify within the traditional binary framework. Maryland would join other jurisdictions that provide this option and further demonstrate the State’s commitment to equitable and modern identity systems.

This legislation reflects careful collaboration and broad support. Sponsors and advocates worked closely with the Maryland Department of Health and the Motor Vehicle Administration to ensure the bill is operationally sound and responsive to agency needs. The bill is also supported by a wide coalition of community organizations across the state, reflecting strong and diverse stakeholder backing.

Beyond the procedural benefits, accurate identity documents are essential to daily life. When identification does not match a person’s identity, individuals face barriers in employment, housing, education, travel, and access to services. These mismatches can expose people to discrimination, stigma, and safety risks. Removing unnecessary barriers to accurate documentation reduces stress, improves mental health outcomes, and allows Marylanders to fully participate in the workforce, the economy, and civic life.

The Commission’s recently released [2026 Maryland LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment Preliminary Findings Report](#) further underscores the need for this legislation. Our statewide survey found that transgender and nonbinary respondents face disproportionate barriers navigating identity documents, which directly affect access to employment, housing, health care, and personal safety. Nearly one-quarter of respondents reported changing their legal name while living in Maryland, and many described the process as difficult and burdensome. The report specifically recommends simplifying and standardizing gender marker and name change processes and reducing unnecessary documentation requirements. House Bill 1589/Senate Bill 626 directly advances these evidence-based recommendations and responds to the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ Marylanders.

Maryland’s progress in advancing LGBTQIA+ equality is measurable and data-driven. According to the [Movement Advancement Project](#), a national think tank that tracks LGBTQIA+ policies across all 50 states, Maryland’s overall policy score increased from 72 percent in January 2023 to approximately 88 percent as of February 2026. During that time, protections related to sexual

orientation increased from 67 percent to 87 percent, and gender identity policy scores rose from 77 percent to 88 percent. These gains reflect the leadership of the Moore-Miller Administration, the continued partnership of the General Assembly, the LGBTQ+ Legislative Caucus, the tireless work of community advocates, and the Commission's ongoing efforts to assess needs, recommend solutions, and track outcomes.

Passage of the Birth Certificate Modernization Act would further increase Maryland's overall score by 0.75 points, bringing the state to approximately 89 percent of possible points. This progress is not symbolic. It reflects real improvements in safety, access, and quality of life for transgender Marylanders and strengthens Maryland's position as a national leader in inclusive policy.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report for House Bill 1589 and Senate Bill 626.

References

1. **Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs.** (2026). *2026 Maryland LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment: Preliminary Findings Report*. Crownsville, MD: Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs.
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2. **Movement Advancement Project (MAP).** (2026). *Equality Maps: State Policy Tally for Maryland*. Retrieved February 2026, from
https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality_maps/profile_state/MD