

Favorable With Amendments:

Testimony on SB0626 - Certificates of Birth, Licenses, and Identification Cards - Sex Designation
(Birth Certificate Modernization Act)

April 1, 2026

Chair Bagnall and esteemed members of the Health Committee:

My name is Emily Shaw and my pronouns are she/her. I'm a resident of Montgomery County, wife, and parent. As someone who knows how critical having accurate official documents can be for accessing services and rights, I believe it is discriminatory and unfair to hinder people from correcting their government documentation to match their identity. With the removal of a harmful component to create a "database of birth information histories" that was added on the Senate floor, this bill will help a lot of Marylanders. I therefore strongly support SB0626 and am seeking your committee's favorable report with amendments.

As someone who works in data management, I've had a view into how our official personally identifying information can help or harm us unexpectedly. Even small documentation differences - a name that has an accented letter in one place but not another, an inconsistently recorded compound last name - can result in lost applications, delayed benefits, and lost time. When the documentation difference is more substantial, as is the case where a parent or birth certificate holder has changed their name or public gender presentation, the consequences can be much more serious. My transgender friends, colleagues and neighbors can face substantial obstacles when they can't easily obtain accurate birth certificates for their children or themselves.

In Montgomery County, in order for a parent to register their child for school they are asked to show a birth certificate. The birth certificate confirms both their child's age and the child's relationship to their parent, enabling the county to link the child's district residency status to their parent's. It is possible to find a way around using a birth certificate through additional cost and legal process. But clearly, the birth certificate is the central form of proof of belonging of the child to the parent, and all the resources and benefits that come with that relationship.

Meanwhile, for the individual owning the birth certificate, that document is also our country's fundamental statement of their American citizenship. For people who change their name or documented gender, there are increasingly serious consequences for having mismatched identity documents. Having an inaccurate birth certificate can cause serious complications in hiring. Nothing highlights this danger better than the SAVE Act, currently before the US Senate. If made law, it will bar people across the US from voting unless they show proof of citizenship - which, if you lack a passport, will be a driver's license plus birth certificate. Mismatched birth certificate information in this case will cause the loss of a fundamental right.

This bill as it was originally written would have created a valuable improvement for many people born in Maryland. However, the bill before you has had an extremely dangerous amendment

attached to it which must be undone before passage. The amendment which requires the creation of a "birth information history" file is nothing more than an effort to create a registry for the purpose of harassment and persecution. We have seen both historically and contemporaneously - in just this past year - how data collected on minority populations for ostensibly neutral reasons can be very quickly turned into a hunting license. In the past month, we have watched the [State of Kansas immediately invalidate hundreds of drivers licenses](#) held by transgender Kansans, because such a list was kept. Undocumented people in states like Texas now [avoid getting essential medical care](#) because the state requires hospitals to collect information about patients' immigration status. This bill as amended would create a similar issue.

This Federal administration and organizations associated with it have routinely shown a willingness to take theoretically protected data and share it with whomever can help them achieve their extremist goals, whether it is legal or not to do so. We cannot guide the state to create a list of people who have changed their birth certificate information, as doing so will almost certainly make the people we seek to support into targets. I strongly urge you to amend the bill you have before you to remove this harmful component.

Bureaucratic records and the systems that hold them have a significant impact on the daily practice of our lives. Marylanders deserve a clear way to update to their birth certificates in order to prevent the serious consequences of inaccuracies in this key official document. I respectfully ask for your "favorable with amendments" report on S0626 -the Birth Certificate Modernization Act.