



State of Maryland Commission on Civil Rights

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April 1, 2026

**Senate Bill 626 – Certificates of Birth, Licenses, and Identification Cards – Sex
Designation (Birth Certificate Modernization Act)**
Position: Support

Dear Chairperson Bagnall, Vice Chairperson Cullison, and Members of the House Health Committee:

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (“MCCR”; “The Commission”) is the State agency responsible for enforcing Maryland’s laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, state contracts, commercial leasing, and health services based on race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, physical and mental disability, source of income, and military status.

Senate Bill 626 modernizes the law to allow an individual – not their licensed health care practitioner – to make a written request under penalty of perjury to the Maryland Department of Health to update their birth certificate so it accurately reflects their sex designation if it differs from the original designation at birth. The bill directs the Secretary of Health to allow an individual to designate their sex as “female”, “male”, or “unspecified or another”. When selecting “unspecified or another”, the Secretary must ensure that the new birth certificate displays “X” in the location that indicates the individual’s sex.

The Commission strongly supports SB626 because the bill provides much needed relief for transgender, nonbinary, and intersex Marylanders who face decades old barriers that impede their right to self-determination and economic security. When the Fairness for All Marylanders Act became law in 2014, MCCR and other supporters knew that prohibiting discrimination based on an individual’s gender identity was just one step toward making Maryland more equitable and inclusive for all. The ability for an individual to update their birth certificate to accurately reflect their sex designation *without needing to pursue medically unnecessary and burdensome requirements* will markedly improve their ability to obtain a job, secure financing, and buy a home – all issues MCCR has seen within investigations into complaints alleging unlawful discrimination in employment and housing based on gender identity.

The pursuit of dignity, respect, and inclusion for transgender, nonbinary, and intersex Marylanders has been long. As previously noted, State law only began protecting an

“Our vision is to have a State that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination.”

individual from unlawful discrimination based on gender identity in 2014. In 2019, State law allowed an individual to identify as female, male, or X on State-issued identification. In 2021, State law changed a court rule so that individuals could petition the court to change their name without needing to pay for an announcement in the local newspaper. And now in 2026, State law should be changed so that individuals can appropriately update their birth certificate – a vital record that impacts nearly every aspect of their life.

For these reasons, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights urges a favorable vote on SB626. Thank you for your time and consideration of the information contained in this letter. MCCR looks forward to the continued opportunity to work with you to promote and improve civil rights in Maryland.