

TO: The Oregon House Committee on Health Care
FR: Ed Reeves, partner at Stoel Rives
DA: Feb 27, 2015
RE: Testimony in Support of HB 2673

Chair Greenlick and members of the committee,

My name is Ed Reeves and I'm a partner at Stoel Rives, a law firm based in Portland, OR. I am also a volunteer lawyer for the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon and Basic Rights Oregon. I am here today to testify personally in support of HB 2673 with the -3 amendment.

I have been practicing employment and labor law for over 30 years. In the last five years, I also have represented more than a half dozen transgender clients and given workshops to more than 75 lawyers as to how to assist transgender people to change their name and gender marker through the court process. I've probably done as much of this work as any lawyer in the state and most of my work has been pro bono. That's because many transgender people do not have the income to pay attorneys' fees or to take time from work for repeated courthouse visits to post notices at each stage of the current process. This process is particularly challenging to people who were born in Oregon but now live in states that will not provide sex or gender change orders. Income and geography should be barriers to attaining personal documents that reflect who you are.

I have experienced firsthand the difficulty of navigating the current court process. Even for an attorney, the process is unnecessarily complex. Each circuit court in this state has a different process they follow and some courts feel the need to ask invasive personal and medical questions due to the outdated language in the current Oregon statute. All courts have onerous posting requirements that require multiple trips to the courthouse.

I have seen firsthand how important it is for my clients to have documentation that reflects who they are, and function as the basis for other needed document changes at the local, state and federal level. It is almost indescribable the sheer relief and joy it has brought to my clients over the years. Not only is attaining accurate documentation personally meaningful, it also reduces a transgender person's likelihood of experiencing discrimination. Unfortunately getting that documentation is currently entirely too onerous both as to the time and the money.

HB 2673 with the -3 amendment will remove barriers and provide a much more private, safe, and efficient process for transgender people. I urge your support and would be happy to answer any questions.