

To: House Healthcare Committee
From: Geeta Lewis
Date: 2/25/2017
Re: YES Vote on HB 2673

Chair Mitch Greenlick and Committee Members,

My name is Geeta Lewis. I am an honorably discharged veteran and an active member of the LGBTQI community.

I cannot overstate just how important HB 2673 is to my emotional and very real physical wellbeing, in addition to the wellbeing of countless transgender Oregonians whose voices will not be heard today. It is on behalf of so many in my community that can't be here to speak their truth that I've chosen to come forward in support of this bill.

Being a transgender woman of color, I exist at the crossroads of the compound oppressions of ethnicity and gender expression. That means I earn significantly less and I'm more likely to be harassed or murdered. Make no mistake; I didn't just wake up one morning and choose to be treated this way. I do, however, wake up every day and choose to live my life as authentically as I know how.

When taken at face value, I'm often treated with the common courtesy, dignity and respect most folks expect, at the market, the bank or the doctor's office. Unfortunately, I continue to be misgendered in every instance where I must present my I. D. And that's despite sharing my pronouns beforehand.

It took nearly four years before I had the means to pursue updating my identity documents that correctly reflect who I am. However, it will very likely be well into March of 2017 before I can finally hold a state sanctioned ID that confirms what I already know, because the current process is very challenging. The current system also makes me and those like me more vulnerable to violence and harassment. It places identity affirming documents financially beyond most folks, who like me, have lived most of the last 10 years on an income that was thousands of dollars below the federal poverty line.

I urge all the members of this committee to support of HB 2673.

And I thank the committee for this opportunity to be heard.

Geeta Lewis
Portland, Oregon