

TO: House Healthcare Committee
FROM: J Gibbons
DATE: February 25, 2017
RE: Vote YES on HB 2673

Chair Mitch Greenlick and Members of Committee:

My name is J Gibbons and I am here to share my story in support of HB 2673, a bill to help transgender Oregonians. I publicly came out as transgender several years ago and started using a different name. I was finally living as the person I had always known myself to be. My name represents who I am, an identity I have spent considerable time and effort struggling to come to terms with and present truthfully to my friends and family.

Currently, none of my identification documents have my correct name, nor do they reflect who I am. As a working-class person, the cost of updating my identity documents was out of reach for years. Even if I could come up with the money some years ago, I didn't know where to go or who to talk to, the process was confusing and cumbersome. Another requirement that stopped me is the rule to publicly post name change documents. I have feared for my safety because I am transgender, so as you can imagine having to go into a government building where my old feminine sounding name would be publicly announced and posted is prohibitive.

I am challenged in countless ways, because my identity documents do not truly reflect who I am. After saving my money and building up the courage, I began the process to change my in January of this year. This was sparked by an infection for which I needed urgent medical care. It took me 48 hours after realizing I was sick to muster the courage to go to the doctors. Due to not having any updated identity documents I knew the staff would call me by the wrong name, and misgender me. Then when I would be called back to the examination room they would yell out the wrong name for the whole waiting room hear. And the nurse might ask me deeply personal questions about things that don't relate to me-all because my ID is wrong. These situations are exhausting and are made worse when I was just trying to see a doctor for my infection. You have the power to improve these circumstances and improve the lives of transgender people like me.

One of the greatest challenges of being a transgender person is having people support and affirm my identity. To be called the wrong name and misgendered is invalidating, its hurtful and it cuts away at all the work I've done to be exactly who I am. I can't walk down the street without someone turning to stare just a little longer. This summer a man at a diner stopped eating to stare at me and intimidated me for so long we left, just in case that person decided to go from intimidating to violent. A few years back I was confronted in a bathroom and yelled at. For my own wellbeing, I never set up a primary care physician nor got the preventative health care I needed for my asthma. All because I wanted to avoid the experience of being outed and invalidated as a transgender person. A small amount of bullying can lead to poor mental

health. Fear of the doctor's office makes people sicker longer. You can change what people see when they look at my documents.

Today the name and gender change process is prohibitively costly, unwieldy, and potentially unsafe for people like me. HB 2673 is an opportunity to put this process in reach of transgender Oregonians and help us thrive. Thank you, members of the committee for the opportunity to share my story. I urge you to support HB 2673.

J Gibbons
North Portland