

To: House Healthcare Committee
From: Joy Stoelting, Parent, Portland, Oregon
Date: February 25, 2017
RE: Vote YES on HB 2673

Dear Representative Mitch Greenlick and House Healthcare Committee Members,

I am writing to ask your support to pass HB 2673.

Learning that our daughter, Ella, is transgender was a complex journey for my husband and I, but relatively speaking that was the easy part. The overwhelmingly difficult part was learning how to get her legal documentation updated.

Updating Ella's name and gender marker is particularly important to minimizing her chances of experiencing harassment or discrimination because of her gender identity. I had previously updated my name when I married and felt well equipped to navigate government processes. Nothing prepared me for the incredibly difficult process of changing my transgender daughter's name and gender marker on her legal documents. The process was costly, arduous and invasive.

I took a day off work to go to the courthouse and after four hours, more than \$121 of fees, several trips up and down the stairs to get confusing, contradictory information from different clerks, I walked away with copious notes and a vague understanding of next steps and that was just the first day of the journey! I spent several hours on the internet and took a total of three days off work to navigate the system. In addition, I spent many of my lunch hours on hold with various county courthouse departments to clarify details and troubleshoot issues. Family Law said it was a Civil Court matter, Civil Court said it was a Family Law matter. I got transferred back and forth so much, I felt like a ping pong ball.

As frustrating and inefficient as the process was for me, I still know I'm one of the lucky ones. I'm salaried employee with paid time off, so the time off didn't affect me financially. I have a desk job that affords me the luxury of having a phone and computer at the ready to make the many calls and emails necessary to navigate the process during business hours. I have access to the internet and a printer, so I can look up and print out the various instructions and forms. Both my husband and I have full-time jobs, and could cover the overall costs. All totaled, with bus fare and/or parking, court filing fees, expediting an amended passport, it has cost us nearly \$600 to get all our daughter's federal and state legal documents amended. Yet, 13 weeks later, and we are still awaiting her updated birth certificate. Somehow our amendment request erased our daughter's info (both old and new) and replaced it with a random man's name. We're hoping this stressful and comical saga will come to an end soon.

As a parent, I am particularly concerned about the public posting requirement. Violence and discrimination against transgender people is a sad reality and many folks legitimately fear for their lives. For Ella's scheduled court hearing, she was called to approach the bench in front of everyone by her birth name. The juxtaposition of an obviously male-sounding name with a female-presenting person, made it public knowledge to all those present that she is transgender. In a medical situation, personal information relating to one's body, genitals, medical care, etc. is protected by HIPAA. Yet, for some reason this information is openly revealed in public courthouses.

Transgender people are already so vulnerable and the current name/gender change process only adds to this vulnerability. Additionally, identity documents are so critical to living a life free from discrimination. I beg the State of Oregon to support HB 2673 for a streamlined, accessible and safe process for updating personal information.

Sincerely,
Joy Stoelting
Northeast Portland