

To: House Healthcare Committee
From: Neola Young
Re: Yes on HB 2673
Date: February 20, 2017

Chair Mitch Greenlick and Members of Committee,

I am writing to voice support for HB 2673, which would remove several barriers transgender Oregonians face when updating crucial identity documents.

Over the past five years, I have worked as an advocate for transgender Oregonians seeking IDs that reflect their names and gender markers. Having updated identity documents means more access to important activities like getting a job, enrolling in school, opening a bank account, or purchasing insurance, all examples of how we improve our quality of life and in turn, improve our communities. Some transgender people who use an ID that doesn't match their gender or their gender presentation face harassment, humiliation, and even violence. They are also more likely to be denied jobs, housing and healthcare. I have personally assisted more than 100 transgender Oregonians in updating documents because I know it is always life changing and at times life-saving.

For a population which already suffers disproportionately from hiring discrimination, unemployment, and poverty, every extra step and every fee can create barriers to getting accurate identity documents. For any Oregonian to update their name, including transgender Oregonians, they must get a court order, which involves many steps including a public posting and questions before a judge in open court. However, there is a significant difference in changing your last name from Smith to Jones, and changing your first name from Jennifer to Jack. The latter example greatly increases one's risk because it reveals deeply personal information because of the gendered nature of names. I often work in healthcare, where patient privacy is taken very seriously, because revealing someone's personal health information can compromise their safety. This bill helps address that issue for transgender Oregonians, because it gives a transgender person the option to increase their privacy by eliminating questions in open court and the public posting requirements that reveal very sensitive health related information.

Additionally, by eliminating the requirement for a court order to update one's Oregon birth record, it reduces the associated fees and streamlines the process. Oregon can ensure that transgender and gender non-conforming people born here every year will be far more able to find work, to travel, and to participate confidently in society.

I urge you to approve HB 2673, knowing that you will make transgender and gender non-conforming Oregonians safer and improve our quality of life, which benefits Oregon.

Respectfully,
Neola H. Young
Transgender Advocate & Consultant