

TO: House Healthcare Committee
FROM: Trystan Reese
DATE: February 22, 2017
RE: Vote YES on HB 2673

Chair Mitch Greenlick and Members of Committee:

My name Trystan Reese, and I write today share my story in support of HB 2673, a bill to help transgender Oregonians like me. I publicly came out as a transgender man 14 years ago and started using a different name. Though I was born female, I have always know myself to be a man and at age 20 was finally able to share with close friends my plan to transition. I have been living as Trystan ever since, and now look like any other man you might see on the street. I am married, and am a dad to two amazing children.

Until last year, I had two completely separate legal identities. The process for getting my name changed in Oregon was so difficult and confusing, even for a working professional such as myself, that every time I tried to fill out the paperwork I gave up. I didn't understand what all of the questions were asking me, and securing a lawyer to assist with the process felt impossible. When you have a family, spending \$1,000 in legal fees can be quite a stretch—especially if you have had negative experiences with legal systems in the past and aren't sure everything will happen as planned. It can feel scary to go up in front of a judge and make your case, and when that fear is coupled with an onerous administrative process, the barriers become insurmountable.

For 13 years, my identification documents did not match each other. I lived in a legal limbo as my birth certificate and passport were different from my driver's license and social security card. This posed myriad challenges when traveling, applying for jobs, or even filling out a FAFSA when I returned to university to get my degree. Only when my name came up on a long waiting list for free legal assistance was I able to get help walking through the process. I was incredibly lucky to get matched up with attorneys who filled out the paperwork with me, paid the filing fees, and even testified to the judge on my behalf.

No Oregonian should be in a position of waiting for free legal help to do something as simple as changing their name and gender on some paperwork. Applying for a job, registering for financial aid, or even filing a police report should be possible for every Oregonian—even transgender ones.

You're incredibly fortunate to be in a position to remove some of these barriers, as the state of California has, to level the playing field for transgender people and update some of these outmoded systems. And I'm certain you wanted to become public servants to make sure that everyone in our state has a fair shot at support their family, accessing health care, and navigating the world safely. HB 2673 is an opportunity to help transgender Oregonians thrive, and I hope you are able to support it.

Thank you for your consideration,

Trystan Reese
Northeast Portland