

May 3, 2017

Chair Prozanski and Members of Committee,

I am writing you today on behalf of Outside In to voice support for HB 2673A, which would remove several barriers to identity change for thousands of transgender Oregonians.

As the Transgender Services Coordinator at the Outside In Medical Clinic, it is my responsibility to run The ID Project. The ID Project is a program providing information, support, and financial aid for transgender and gender non-conforming individuals who are trying to legally change their names and gender markers and to update them on their IDs. The demand for such a program is very high, as having correct and gender-affirming IDs allows our clients to apply for jobs and housing, travel, go out, and move through the world without fear that they will face extra discrimination or bureaucratic hurdles from those who see “F” when they expect “M” or vice versa. In the past six months alone we have provided financial aid to more than 110 people, and helped many more through the process in other ways.

For a population, which suffers so heavily from hiring discrimination, unemployment, and poverty, every extra step and fee can represent an insurmountable barrier to identity change. Transgender communities are at such high risk for violent attacks and harassment, the thought of having to announce their name change to the world is enough to make someone stay at home rather than going to the court house, especially if they are uncertain of the county policies or how they might be treated by staff. I encounter these issues every day and work to ameliorate them for our clients. This bill represents a step in the right direction.

By eliminating the requirement for a court order to update one’s Oregon birth certificate, reducing the associated fees, standardizing processes, and Oregon will bring its policies more in line with the most progressive states, and ensure transgender and gender non-conforming people born here will be far more able to find work, to travel, and to participate confidently in civil society. Those transgender people who, like me, chose to make our lives here as adults will be better able and more likely to go through the court procedures to live openly and free of fear.

I urge you to approve this bill and make transgender and gender non-conforming Oregonians safer and prouder of their home.

Thank You,  
Erica Wegener, Transgender Services Coordinator

*The point of return.*<sup>SM</sup>

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