



TO: Senate Judiciary Committee
FROM: Seda Collier
RE: Vote YES on HB 2673A
DATE: April 24, 2017

Chair Prozanski and members of the committee:

My name is Seda Collier and I am on the board of Trans*Ponder, a transgender founded and led non-profit created to empower and support trans/gender diverse people and our allies. We are based in Eugene and provide support to hundreds of transgender Oregonians and their families in Central and Southern Oregon.

I am here on behalf of Trans*Ponder and to share my story in support of HB 2673, a bill to help transgender Oregonians.

Trans*Ponder was started by necessity by a couple of us who were navigating systems that do not easily affirm us, and at times are downright frightening. One of the major obstacles we each have faced personally, and is of major community concern, is the name and gender change process. The obstacles we face are monetary, bureaucratic and psychological.

At Trans*Ponder, we work hard to find ways to streamline the process for trans/gender diverse people, yet every week we hear stories from community members who've had difficult experiences, including from Trans*Ponder's administrative staff, who are college educated and employed. How can we expect our members, many who are underemployed and emotionally vulnerable to be able to do this alone and complete it emotionally unscathed? We serve rural Oregonians who travel miles to attend our meetings or use the internet to reach us for support because they do not feel safe to seek support in their communities. They share with us that it is downright dangerous to have incongruent identification, and that it is a barrier for them to obtain the services and employment that they need to live.

We know that when we do not have proper documentation we are more likely to avoid medical care; more likely to get harassed by law enforcement; and more likely to be outed in unsafe situations. We have higher instances of depression, anxiety and self-esteem directly related to gender affirming obstacles, and this contributes to challenges in seeking and maintaining gainful employment. I have experienced these things personally and professionally, and these realities are well documented in the 2015

United States Transgender Survey. In this political climate, where states like North Carolina have implemented discriminatory bathroom rules and the Federal government has reversed protections for transgender youth, I urge you to demonstrate Oregon's leadership for transgender equality and human rights.

Today the name change process is inaccessible for people monetarily and psychologically, and it is potentially unsafe for people like me. HB 2673A is an opportunity to put this process in reach of transgender Oregonians and help us thrive. You have the power to improve these circumstances and improve the lives of transgender people like me.

Thank you, members of the committee for the opportunity to speak, I urge you to support HB 2673A.