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From the Desk of  
Representative  
Jennifer Williamson

## American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon Urges a Yes Vote on HB 2673

The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon<sup>1</sup> urges your support of HB 2673, which would create a safer, more efficient, and affordable process for persons seeking to change their name and gender on vital records for the purpose of affirming gender identity.

ACLU of Oregon has a long history of supporting and defending the LGBTQ community. Through litigation, lobbying, public education, and organizing, we seek to create a just society for all LGBTQ people and work to build a country where our communities can live openly without discrimination and enjoy equal rights, personal autonomy, and freedom of expression and association. With these values as our frame, we fully support HB 2673.

Transgender individuals with identity documents that do not match their gender identity often face the very challenging and painful situation of being misgendered or outed as being transgender. This problem is compounded by the fact that many aspects of the current process for changing one's name and gender marker on vital records create significant barriers for transgender individuals.

For many transgender people, it can be frightening to learn that their name will need be posted in a courthouse in order to obtain vital records that accurately reflect their gender identity. For those who have experienced discrimination, harassment, and/or violence from people harboring prejudice against transgender people, many people fear public disclosure of the fact that they wish to legally change their name and gender marker.

Beyond the posting requirement, in many counties, judges require individuals petitioning for a gender change on vital records to appear in court and testify to the completion of their transition. Again, in light of the discrimination that many transgender individuals have experienced, such a court proceeding can be incredibly daunting. This is particularly so if a person cannot afford an attorney to help walk them through the process.

In addition, most counties do not provide public forms for gender changes, making it very difficult to understand how to navigate the process or proceed without an attorney.<sup>2</sup> The cost of an attorney, along with court filing fees, are often cost-prohibitive, due to the fact transgender people disproportionately live in poverty.

Each of these difficulties would be alleviated by the alternative process created by HB 2673. The ACLU of Oregon is grateful to see that the bill has been introduced and urges your yes vote.

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<sup>1</sup> The ACLU of Oregon is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of civil liberties and civil rights. We have more than 37,000 members across the State of Oregon, and that number is growing as we speak.

<sup>2</sup> Although Multnomah County has improved its processes somewhat in recent years (as they at least have gender change forms available for public use and numerous judges who understand and are sensitive to the difficulties that many transgender individuals face), the process still involves public posting and court fees.