

Testimony of Gretchen Raffa, MSW
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In Support of HB 7006, *An Act Concerning Birth Certificate Amendments*
March 18, 2015

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and honorable members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Gretchen Raffa, Director of Public Policy, Advocacy & Strategic Engagement at Planned Parenthood of Southern New England testifying in support of HB 7006, *An Act Concerning Birth Certificate Amendments*. Our agency serves over 65,000 patients every year for reproductive and sexual health services. As health care providers we understand the importance of all people receiving the medical treatment that is best suited for them and are committed to taking necessary steps to ensure a non-discriminatory environment for everyone. To promote the health of our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) patients we are continuously looking at our policies, clinical practices and staff training to improve access to quality health care and health care coverage for all individuals who come to our health centers.

Modern medical standards for transgender patients reflect that not all transgender people need or can receive surgery. As health care providers we understand how important it is provide medically appropriate care for each individual that reflects their needs and the realities of their daily lived experiences. Unfortunately, the current procedure for transgender and intersex individuals to amend the gender and name on their birth certificates in our state requires proof of surgery. The reality, however, is that not everyone needs or can afford surgery. It may not be covered by a person's insurance, they may be too young for it, or they may have a medical condition preventing them from undergoing it. Regardless, surgery simply is not the medical care that best meets everyone's needs and should not be required to update their birth certificate to match their lived gender. HB 7006 follows policy endorsed by the American Medical Association and the American Psychological Association and follows the Standards of Care recommended for transgender individuals by health experts worldwide.

Transgender people face an ongoing struggle to obtain identity documents that match their lived gender. Having official, government-issued identity documents is crucial to many aspects of everyday life, including driving a car, paying with a credit card, applying for a job or school, voting, or boarding a plane. The reality is that birth certificates are crucial to proving that we are who we are, and it is no different for transgender individuals. Whether it's getting a job, enrolling in school, voting or simply obtaining other identity documents, birth certificates are often required. Having documentation that matches a person's gender can mean the difference of having to fight for housing, or employment opportunities. This is especially important to our transgender patients, when 19 percent of respondents to a national survey on transgender discrimination, reported being homeless as a result of their transitionⁱ. When it comes to unemployment, those same survey respondents experienced unemployment at twice the rate of the general population, with rates for people of color up to four times the national unemployment rate.ⁱⁱ As advocates for reproductive justice we must consider all aspects of a person's life including those that may affect their economic stability and believe we have an obligation to help remove any barriers that may impact these statistics, and having consistent government documentation can make all the difference when seeking housing or employment.

The current standard for correcting gender designations on birth certificates is outdated and not supported by contemporary medical views. According to the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, only one-fifth (21%) of transgender people who had transitioned were able to update all of their identification documents and records with their new gender, and one-third hadn't updated any of their documents.ⁱⁱⁱ

Our state must continue to move forward and update laws and policies to prohibit discrimination against transgender people or that put unnecessary, outdated barriers on the transgender community from being able to access their basic human rights and provide for themselves and their families. There is no question that clarifying the procedure for transgender and intersex individuals to amend the gender and name on their birth certificates is an important step in that direction. We urge you to support HB7006 *An Act Concerning Birth Certificate Amendments* and protect the basic human rights of transgender people in Connecticut. Thank you.

ⁱGrant, Jamie M., Lisa A. Mottet, Justin Tanis, Jack Harrison, Jody L. Herman, and Mara Keisling. *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*. Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011 accessed March 28, 2014, http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/ntds_full.pdf

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.