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Public Health Committee
Senate Co-Chair Sen. Terry B. Gerratana
House Co-Chair Rep. Matthew Ritter

Testimony re: H.B. No.7006: AN ACT CONCERNING BIRTH CERTIFICATE AMENDMENTS.

Distinguished members of the Public Health Committee,

I am writing to urge you to vote for HB7006, which modernizes statutes authorizing the issuance of birth certificates for transgender people with an accurate gender designation. I am a licensed clinical social worker in private practice of psychotherapy for over 30 years. For the past 10 years I have worked extensively with transgender individuals and their families. During this time I have evaluated more than 100 transgender clients. I have learned from direct experience with my clients the importance of having documentation that accurately reflects their gender identity. This documentation includes driver's license, passport, social security listing and birth certificate.

Transgender individuals vary widely in the sequence and number of steps they take as they choose to live in ways that increasingly affirm their gender identity, which is their inner sense of who they are. "Social transition" is the term we use to describe a change in public presentation from one gender to another. This step may or may not be accompanied by medical interventions such as hormone treatment or surgery. Some transgender people make a full social transition without taking hormones, and many never have surgery. For others who do have surgery, the surgery may take place years after making their social transition.

For all of us, it is imperative that the gender marker on our identifying documents conforms to our gender presentation in our affirmed gender. Congruence in presentation and documentation is essential to an individual's safety and comfort. For those of us who are not transgender, the gender marker on our birth certificate remains valid throughout our lives. For transgender people who make a social transition this is no longer the case. A mismatch between the gender marker in someone's documentation and their gender presentation increases the likelihood of discrimination or violence based on gender identity or expression.

A transgender person's decision whether or when to have surgery is a personal decision that is separate from their affirmation of a gender identity other than the one listed on their birth certificate. Requiring a letter from a surgeon to change the gender marker on one's birth certificate places unfair hardship on transgender individuals who have not had, cannot have or do not want to have surgery. The alternative suggested in this bill is a humane approach supported by what we have learned from the lived experience of our transgender citizens.

I urge you to support HB 7006, An Act Concerning Birth Certificate Amendments.

Sincerely,

