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**Testimony on AAC Birth Certificate Amendments  
Public Health Committee  
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Submitted By: Stephen A. Karp, LMSW**

The National Association of Social Workers, CT Chapter representing over 2800 members supports HB 7006. This bill makes a reasonable modification to statute regarding gender identification by specifying the requirements individuals must meet to have their current and accurate gender noted on their birth certificate.

The current process includes the outdated requirement of having to have gender change surgery prior to being able to have a birth certificate gender marker changed. Not all individuals who have a gender change are candidates for surgery. Some individuals cannot have surgery due to age or health condition(s). Others cannot afford the surgery, do not have insurance coverage for the surgery or do not need surgery. To require surgery in 2015 is archaic.

The bill sets appropriate standards as to having a health care professional evaluate when an individual's gender should be updated on a birth certificate. This language provides clarity as to the requirements to be met and the specific health care providers who can evaluate the need for a change in gender marking. It is a reasonable standard that is not burdensome to the individual while assuring the Department of Public Health that a change in gender marking is appropriate.

Not having an updated birth certificate creates numerous problems for the individual. Birth certificates are often required for travel documents, attaining employment and schooling. Lacking a consistent document that indicates the person's current gender can lead to denial of applications in a range of situations including housing and work. This in turn leads to a higher use of public safety net programs by transgendered persons because of being denied the means to become self-sufficient.

One's gender identity is a core piece of who we are as individuals. Transgender peoples simply seek the same right to self-identity that everyone else has. This bill confers on them the important right to have their birth certificate accurately state their gender, with or without having endured gender surgery.

In the last five years at least six states have updated their birth certificate policies, including two New England states, Rhode Island and Vermont. CT that has strong anti-discrimination laws and a history of being a leader amongst states in recognition of individual rights. Thus it is time for our state to make this reasonable revision in regards to designation of gender marking on birth certificates. We urge timely passage of HB 7006.