

Committee on Public Health
Proposed Bill No. 7006: An Act Concerning Birth Certificate Amendments
Testimony of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund
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The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) is a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering women, girls, and their families to achieve equal opportunities in their personal and professional lives. Throughout its history, CWEALF has worked to prevent discrimination against underrepresented groups. This included playing a leadership role in advocating to expand the state's anti-discrimination to cover gender identity and expression. Through our Legal Education Program, CWEALF provides information, advocacy, and referrals to individuals facing a variety of legal issues. In particular, we provide legal support and resources to the LGBT community about their protections under the law.

We urge you to support Proposed House Bill No. 7006: An Act Concerning Birth Certificate Amendments.

This bill would amend the current practices regarding transgender individuals' ability to change the name and gender marker on their birth certificates by bringing the law in line with the current best practices prescribed by the American Psychological Association (APA) and the American Medical Association (AMA).

Currently, the protocols for birth certificate changes in Connecticut require an individual to undergo some kind of surgery before changing the gender marker on their birth certificate. This presents a number of problems to transgender people aiming to bring their documentation in line with their current gender identity and presentation. First, some transgender people cannot have surgery. This may be because they cannot afford surgery, because insurance does not cover the procedure, or because they have a medical condition or situation disqualifying them from surgical procedures.

In addition, some people may not need surgery. It is important to understand that surgery is one of multiple treatments for gender dysphoria, formerly named gender identity disorder. Gender dysphoria is the name for the mental anguish and distress resulting from a misalignment between one's sex assigned at birth and one's gender identity. There are various ways to relieve this distress, including surgical procedures, hormonal treatments, and various other treatment plans. Non-surgical treatment plans may be more affordable, accessible, and appropriate for an individual's case. Relieving gender dysphoria is a highly individualized process, and it is important to change protocol to reflect this reality.

The proposed bill, An Act Concerning Birth Certificate Amendments, would shift requirements away from gender-confirming surgery. Instead, transgender individuals would be able to change the gender marker on their birth certificate by providing proof of "surgical, hormonal, or other

treatment,” which is a much more appropriate standard. This proof would consist of a letter from a healthcare provider who has knowledge of the individual’s health care needs. Through this new process, transgender people could change their birth certificate more easily and with requirements that better reflect their individual needs and plans of treatment.

This new language would bring the birth certificate amendment process in line with the best practices prescribed by the AMA and the APA for the treatment of transgender people. In addition, this change would follow the lead of many other states and regions, including California, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, and the District of Columbia, which have similarly modernized their birth certificate processes.

Finally, amending the current birth certificate policies would bring them in line with the requirements for changing other types of documentation in Connecticut. The proposed requirements in the bill would be the same as changing a gender marker on a Connecticut driver’s license.

Creating uniform policies for amending multiple kinds of documentation would make life easier for all transgender people in Connecticut. The process would be easier to navigate, but the benefits do not end there. Currently, when a person cannot provide multiple kinds of documentation with consistent and matching information, they may be denied employment or housing. As a result, transgender people are far more likely to require state assistance in these arenas. The ability to change one’s birth certificate easily and according to an individualized plan of care would lift an economic burden not only from the shoulders of transgender people, but from the state as well. When transgender people are better able to change their birth certificates, everybody benefits. For these reasons, we encourage the Committee's support of Proposed House Bill No. 7006: *An Act Concerning Birth Certificate Amendments*.

Thank you for your consideration and for taking the time to read our testimony today.