

My testimony on H.628 from Friday February 4, 2022.

For the record, my name is Brenda Churchill, I am the state house liaison for the LGBTQIA alliance of Vermont. I am here today to testify on H.628, a bill that has finally made it to the state house after 2 years of the work of many people. I will first speak to my involvement since 2020.

It's' genesis was in an inquiry from Oregon through the pride center of Vermont. As Rep Taylor detailed on Wednesday, a former Vermonter was unable to obtain their Oregon State Drivers License on the fact that the birth certificate was not issued from a state that allowed any designation other than the binary gender markers M or F. As I listened to that ex Vermonter explain the details of their frustration in being able to affect a change by calling and writing officials in the state of Vermont, it occurred to me that the work we did to add a third gender marker to Vermont's driver's licenses and official IDs was literally putting the cart before the horse. I knew at that moment, we needed to change that and the process to correctly allow Vermonters of all genders to amend their birth certificates. as can be done in 12 other states including the District of Columbia.

As efforts gained traction to facilitate that addition to our birth records, we had folks in all levels of state government urge us to continue to pursue this and the consensus from a report that was researched by the Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD) led us to understand that we could achieve this through rule making and there was precedent for doing this in Vermont and other states. We were able to gain a meeting with David Englander that, with Rep Taylor's help, determined that if we indeed did that, we would be creating an inequity. Let me explain that a bit.

Current law to change your sex designation on Vermont birth certificates (and a disclaimer here, I am not a lawyer or training to be one) puts conditions on the individual to have that change on your birth certificate. I just will mention that there is a cost here that is on the person or their insurance company. There are fees to courts to make that document change. Doctors will attest to the change in gender, largely thought back when these statutes were written, to be surgically performed operations, again, at a cost to the individual. A competent and degreed psychologist must also certify that the individual is or has been meeting the requirements to live authentically. I had a note from my GP and from a certified psychologist in order to just change

my name. Once that has been done, you are "allowed" to make those changes.

The inequity part (as explained by Mr Englander) comes from allowing a non-binary person to just ask to do it without the gate keeping that m2f or f2m transgender folks are required now by law to do, often at great expense and time to the individual. Beside the obvious inequity in this there is also a discriminatory part that is often overlooked. Many folks do not possess the means or money to be their authentic self and continue a closeted life Being economically disadvantaged and part of a marginalized community often leads to depression and if not resolved, suicide. We discriminate in a way that harms our marginalized community that can not achieve their authentic selves.

Listening to questions from representatives in this room on Wednesday, I realized that this bill would be critical to lowering the legislatively imposed barriers that were put in place by well intentioned legislators not that long ago. Those barriers placed a burden on transgender folk that if insurmountable, could lead to them to harm or kill themselves. These statistics are real and reflected in the surveys and the toll on human life. For me, being able to live authentically, and to be able to move the needle in many way to prevent unnecessary hurt or loss will make Vermont a much better place to live and work.

I urge you to accept the amendments from Mr Englander and vote to allow this bill to go to the entire assembly to become law and create equity for all vermonters who wish to become their authentic selves.

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"Vermont is a state that has often shown the rest of the United States where to go and how to get there."



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