



Testimony in Support of House Bill 5654
AN ACT CONCERNING THE UPDATING OF STATE FORMS, APPLICATIONS AND METHODS OF IDENTIFICATION TO INCLUDE A NONBINARY GENDER OPTION

March 19, 2021

Distinguished Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Center for Children's Advocacy (CCA), a non-profit organization representing Connecticut's most at-risk children. We lead CCA's Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP) with the Yale Gender Program. The Yale Gender Program is an interdisciplinary clinic supporting transgender and nonbinary youth 3-25 and their families. We provide supports for medical transition, related health concerns, community connections, family support, and legal issues, should they arise. In addition, the mission of CCA's MLP is to address the health inequities born by low-income children, focusing on the disparities affecting children and youth, in order to improve health outcomes through direct legal advocacy, interdisciplinary education & training, and systems reform. We often work with children whose health is compromised when they cannot access identity documents that accurately reflect who they are.

We support the passage of **House Bill 5654, An Act Concerning the Updating of State Forms, Applications and Methods of Identification to Include a Nonbinary Gender Option**. We urge you to pass this bill for the following reasons:

1. The ability to possess accurate identification documents is necessary to children's well-being.

Access to accurate identity documents is a critical necessity, as is the ability to accurately identify oneself when required to do so on government forms. For transgender and gender nonbinary youth, amending identity documents can be one part of gender affirmation.¹ Research has made clear that gender affirmation supports the well-being of young people, while reducing health problems.² Specifically, possessing identity documents that are consistent with one's identity has been associated with a reduction in suicidal ideation and suicide attempts.³ Although the process of correcting identification documents can be onerous for youth especially, study has shown that referring to youth in ways that affirm their gender identity lowers their mental health risks.⁴

¹ Anna Martha Vaitzes Fontanari et al., *Gender Affirmation Is Associated with Transgender and Gender Nonbinary Youth Mental Health Improvement*, 7 *LGBT HEALTH* 237, 237 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1089/lgbt.2019.0046>.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.* at 238; see also Ayden I Schiem, et al., *Gender-Concordant Identity Documents and Mental Health Among Transgender Adults in the USA: A Cross-Sectional Study*, 5 *Lancet Pub. Health* e196, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667\(20\)30032-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667(20)30032-3).

⁴ Stephen T. Russell, et al., *Chosen Name Use is Linked to Reduced Depressive Symptoms, Suicidal Ideation, and Suicidal Behavior Among Transgender Youth*, 63 *J. ADOLESCENT HEALTH* 503, 505 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2018.02.003>.

Major medical organizations have recognized the importance of accurate identity documents. The American Medical Association explicitly supports policies that include “an undesignated or nonbinary gender option” on identification documents and government forms.⁵ The American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association have similarly issued policy statements recognizing the harm caused by policies that prevent people from obtaining identity documents that are consistent with their identity.⁶

H.B. 5654 requires state agencies to include an “X” gender marker option for individuals who are filling out forms or applications, or seeking identification documents. In doing so, the bill would provide a needed pathway allowing nonbinary adults and youth to access accurate identity documents. The bill also explicitly formalizes a policy already implemented by the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles, which has issued driver’s licenses and identification cards with “X” gender markers since January 2020.⁷

2. Many other states already provide an “X” gender marker option on identity documents.

A dozen or more states have already enacted statutes to provide an “X” gender marker option on at least some identity documents.⁸ Passing this bill would put Connecticut in line with many other states, and would enhance our state’s existing commitment to inclusion.

Having worked with children and families throughout Connecticut, we understand how important accurate identity documents and inclusive government forms can be for children’s well-being. On behalf of Connecticut’s children, we strongly urge you to support H.B. 5654.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact our office with any questions or concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

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⁵ AM. MED. ASS’N, CONFORMING SEX AND GENDER DESIGNATION ON GOVERNMENT IDS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS H-65.967 (2019).

⁶ AM. PSYCH. ASS’N, APA RESOLUTION ON TRANSGENDER, GENDER IDENTITY, AND GENDER EXPRESSION NON-DISCRIMINATION 1 (2019); AM. PSYCHIATRIC ASS’N, POSITION STATEMENT ON DISCRIMINATION AGAINST TRANSGENDER AND GENDER DIVERSE INDIVIDUALS (2018).

⁷ CONN. DEP’T OF MOTOR VEHICLES, GENDER DESIGNATION ON A LICENSE OR IDENTIFICATION CARD (2020), <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DMV/20/29/B-385.pdf>; Jordan Fenster, *DMV to Allow Non-binary Gender Option Starting Monday*, N.H. REG. (Jan. 25, 2020), <https://www.nhregister.com/local/article/DMV-to-allow-non-binary-gender-option-starting-15003870.php>.

⁸ Valeriya Safronova, *Passports May Soon Include a New Option for Gender Identity*, N.Y. Times (Feb. 24, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/24/style/gender-neutral-x-passport-ids.html>.