



New York City Council  
Committee on Health  
Monday, November 10, 2014

Comments on Int. 491 & Int. 492  
Amending sex designation on birth records & Reporting and  
an advisory board on gender marker change requirement

by

Patricia Harrington

My name is Patricia Harrington and I am a plaintiff in Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund's lawsuit challenging the current New York City requirement that transgender people undergo surgery in order to update their birth certificates.

I'm a transgender woman who was born and raised in Queens. Growing up in the '50's, I learned early on that I was at risk for simply being myself. When I was 5 years old, I was sent to a summer day camp. When they told the girls to go to one group and the boys to another, I went with the girls. The camp counselors came and dragged me over to the boys. They proceeded to severely harass me in front of everybody. I ended up being subjected to such bullying that my arm became infected from one of the boys repeatedly giving me a friction burn. When my family saw my arm, they pulled me out of camp.

I learned that it was dangerous to be who I am, so I spent the next 40 years hiding who I was. When that eventually became unbearable, I started exploring the option of transitioning. I undertook the appropriate medical and legal steps and have been happily living as myself for the past thirteen years.

In 2010 I moved to New Jersey and had to get a new driver's license. I had had a female New York driver's license for the prior decade, but when I tried to get a female New Jersey driver's license, I was turned away. That happened because I had to present my New York City birth certificate, which I have been unable to get corrected because of its discriminatory surgery requirement. I then had to jump through hoops and get my doctor to fill out a special form, which I then had to take back to the New Jersey DMV. While I was able to get my license, it was a frustrating and unnecessary experience that makes me think twice about ever moving again.

It's been a long journey for me to be able to be myself and not worry about what other people think. While I'm proud to be a transgender woman, I should be able to live my life just like everyone else and not have to face these challenges for the rest of my life. I transitioned 13 years ago, but incidents like this bring back all the memories of continually being told there's something wrong with who I am. There's nothing wrong with who I am, and I would just like my Birth Certificate to reflect that.

I hope the City Council will pass Int. 491 and change this harmful policy once and for all. Doing so will improve the lives of transgender people. Thank you.