



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

Naz Seenauth

My name is Naz Seenauth. I am 20 years old, a college student, and a transgender man. 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 was born in Queens Village, New York. My parents are immigrants from Guyana. They wanted their children to have opportunities that they didn't have. They made sure my siblings and I were clothed, fed, and had a roof over our heads. They also made it possible for us to get an education. They worked hard to provide for us and they succeeded. In just one year, I'll be a first generation college graduate with a dual bachelor's degree, and on my way to a master's program.

I've spent a long time trying to be who I am. Once I was ready, I faced challenges. I came out to a conservative Muslim family and I shared with many people my true identity. Transitioning was a challenge to me socially and I lost some people in my life. But I also gained many people in my life.

I started my first shot of testosterone on November 29th 2012. After that first shot, I was able to start living my truth and got closer to being and feeling like a whole person. It has been quite an experience, often challenging but definitely worth the process. After a few months on testosterone, I decided to change my name to fit my gender identity. And along with the name change order, I was also able to receive a letter stating that I have undergone medical intervention to transition to male. This letter allowed me to change my gender identity on many of my documents.

Problematically though, many of the places that I went to change my gender marker were not completely sure of the protocol. For example, at the DMV, I gave the letter to the teller and they had to call over a supervisor and another person to figure out what to do. At school, I had to go to the director of the registrar's office to get my gender marker change.

After many uncomfortable talks, I was able to get my correct gender on each of my IDs except for my birth certificate. And although we do not use our birth certificates every day as we do our photo IDs, when it comes to certain employment opportunities, we have to present our birth certificates. And that brings forth uncomfortable and unwanted conversations with future employers. There is a forced outing and it can feel unsafe at times. Many of the awkward conversations that I've had such as the ones at the DMV, Social Security, and at school could be avoided if my birth certificate matched my gender identity. No one should have to live in fear of harassment and discrimination.

That's why I am asking you to change this discriminatory birth certificate policy. Your action will make life easier for transgender people like me and countless other transgender people who were born in New York City. Our quality of life depends on it. Thank you.