



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

Marco Wylie

Good afternoon. My name is Marco Wylie 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 would like to ask all of you to picture the most personal thing about your-self. Something that, perhaps, you feel terrified to disclose. Something you would be scared to tell someone for fear of rejection or embarrassment. Now I want you to imagine writing it down in big bold letters and posting it on the walls of your work place, in an email sent to everyone you know, and on a t-shirt for everybody to see. That is a glimpse into what my life often feels like as a transgender person. Transitioning is one of the most private things a person can go through. Trans people do not have the luxury of hiding away during this process; instead, every one you know gets to watch.

I was born May 11th, 1985 in New York City, and labeled female at birth. I went to an all-girls school right here in the city for ten years, during which time I was taunted, teased, and harassed in many ways by my peers as well as some of the faculty. As a child I wore short hair and gender-neutral clothes when I wasn't in my uniform made of a tunic and a puffy sleeved blouse. Just being gay at that school was bad enough. People on the street would assume I was a boy until I reached a certain age where it became apparent that I was not. Strangers would stare and taunt, some would even resort to violence. Friends wouldn't hang out with me, let alone even hold my hand for fear of what others might think of them. I was a very depressed child as a result, and still struggle with depression to this day.

At an early age I saw a lot of therapists and doctors, mostly out of my school's request. I was diagnosed with Gender Identity Disorder at the age of eight and yet nobody spoke to me about it or knew what to do with that label. When I was growing up, I didn't know any trans people. I didn't even know many gay people. It was only when I went to college that I first learned the word transgender and had a friend who had already transitioned. It terrified me because I felt very similar. I knew that this was something that hit very close to home and I chose to ignore it out of fear. Growing up it was so ingrained in my mind that girls who dressed like boys and boys who dressed like girls were somehow shameful and sick. In college I grew my hair long and began wearing push up bras and feminine clothes. I tried desperately to be a woman and even tried to convince myself that I desired men, thus denying myself of who I really was.

It was only a few years after I graduated that I realized my depression was rooted in my horrible childhood experiences. I began therapy for the first time on my own and on the first day, sat down on the couch, and said through tears, "I'm worried I'm trans and I don't want to be." It took a long time for me to accept my-self and become the strong person I am today. Transitioning is by no means a walk in the park. A lot of trans people experience loss of their family and friends, they're fired from their jobs, evicted from their homes, and threatened at times to the point of death.

Having this law changed for trans people would be a major step for human rights. It doesn't make sense that you can change your gender and name on every single form of identification, but not on your birth certificate. People need congruency. Not letting this law pass will definitely continue the abuse trans people experience. You can change so many lives by changing this law.

Requiring people like me to have what is called "bottom surgery" in order to change their gender on their birth certificates is an unjust thing to ask of any-body. I don't want or need that surgery as part of my transition. Moreover, many trans people cannot afford to have surgery, let alone even pay for therapy or hormones. To request this is unjust and it furthers the discriminatory mindset that leads people to harm the trans community.

Being who you are is a human right. And much like how people treated the lesbian and gay community in past decades, trans people experience much of the same treatment today. Not allowing people to fully transition by changing all of their documents furthers the injustice that promotes violence and hatred toward us. I hope that my story and the factual information I've discussed will help sway you to understand why this is necessary for people. I just want to make sure that nobody has to go through the humiliation and cruelty that I endured, and passing this law will make a huge difference in making that a reality.