



New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Monday, November 17, 2014

Comments on Proposed Amendment to Section 207.05 of Article 207
of the New York City Health Code

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 '50s, 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 New York City Department of Health & Mental Hygiene will amend Section 207.05 of Article 207 of the New York City Health Code and change this harmful policy once and for all. Doing so will improve the lives of transgender people. Thank you.