

Thank you, for the record my name is Emily Russo my pronouns are (they/them/theirs) I am the Transgender Program Coordinator at the Pride Center of Vermont. I am here today in support of bill H.628.

I would like to start by relaying some data on discrimination faced by the transgender and gender non-conforming community. This will help give an idea of why it is so important to create equitable systems for trans and gender non-conforming folks in our community. According to a study done by the Williams Institute, the transgender community experiences violence at four times the rate as their cisgender counterparts. Trans people, and specifically trans women of color, have increasingly been fatally victimized over the years, and 2020 was one of the deadliest years for trans and gender non-conforming people.

In addition to crimes of victimization the trans community also faces staggeringly high rates of attempted suicide. Research conducted by the American Academy of Pediatrics recorded alarming levels of attempted suicide among transgender youth—finding the highest rates are among transgender boys and non-binary youth specifically. In a study published by the Williams Institute on suicide attempts among transgender and gender non-conforming adults, 41 percent of trans and gender non-conforming adults report a suicide attempt in their lifetime, which vastly exceeds the 4.6 percent of the overall U.S. population.

H.628 would allow transgender and gender non-conforming folks to have their gender identity reflected across identification documents. This will help mitigate some of discrimination that is experienced by trans and gender non-conforming folks attempting to change legal documents to affirm their identity. A lot of assistance I provide to the trans community through my role is changing documents to reflect name and/or gender marker. This process can be long and frustrating, which can impact the mental well-being of an individual. Allowing transgender and gender non-conforming individuals to amend their vital records to accurately reflect and affirm their identity through a simplified process will go a long way toward creating more equitable systems for the transgender and gender non-conforming communities. Working to remove as many barriers as possible for trans and gender non-conforming people to live authentically reduces harm to the community.

I am in support of Mr. Englander's proposed amendments.

Thank you for your time.