



Written Testimony in Support of HB 1039 – Support employment, opportunity and dignity for transgender Coloradans!

My name is Karla Gonzales Garcia. I am the Policy Director of the Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR). COLOR works to engage and empower the Latinx community to speak out about the policies that impacts our community. We work with women of color, LGBT folks, and other marginalized groups to ensure that we are all treated with dignity and respect.

We strongly support House Bill 1039, which would make it easier for transgender Coloradans to change the gender marker on their birth certificate. A corrected birth certificate not only helps to truly reflect a person's gender and honor their transition, but also helps them to correct important records and identity documents like a driver's license. Without a birth certificate and identity documents that accurately reflect a person's gender identity, they risk being denied housing and employment opportunities.

Transgender people experience unemployment at twice the rate of the general population with rates for people of color up to four times the national unemployment rate. Over one-quarter (26%) of transgender people report that they have lost a job due to being transgender or gender non-conforming. For the Latinx community and other people of color, discrimination in the workplace is even more pervasive, sometimes resulting in up to twice or three times the rates of various negative outcomes. Discrimination can happen when someone transitions while employed, as well as during the hiring process.

Without stable employment, transgender Coloradans struggle to support themselves and their families. Fifteen percent (15%) of transgender people report a household income under \$10,000/year. That is nearly four times the rate for the general population. Those who lost a job due to bias lived at this level of poverty at six times the rate of the general population

Identity documents that do not match result in challenges to employment and financial stability, but they may also put a person in a situation where they will face harassment or violence. Forty percent (40%) of transgender people who presented gender incongruent identification reported being harassed and 3% reported being assaulted or attacked.

Right now in order to make a change on a birth certificate people need to show proof of surgical transition. Transition-related surgeries are rarely covered by health insurance. With the high rate of poverty and unemployment in the transgender community and the barriers to health care experienced by many transgender people, this pushes transition surgeries out of reach for many. Additionally, some people who want to seek transition related surgery cannot

have it for medical reasons. It is also worth noting that some transgender people do not want surgery. They do not feel that it is a necessary part of their transition.

Making surgery a requirement may force surgical transition on people who do not want it and with the financial barriers, it means that the option of correcting the birth certificate is often available only to those with means. An individual working with licensed health care professionals are the ones best qualified to evaluate and determine when an individual's gender should be updated on their birth certificate – not a judge who does not know them or their experiences.

Identity documents that match a person's identity and presentation is an essential part of accessing employment opportunities, housing, and health care. It ensures that people can travel safely. It means that people can vote and have a say in who represents their interests. By updating the process for correcting a birth certificate, we will increase employment opportunities, begin to create a path out of poverty and support individuals to succeed and thrive.

Colorado has a proud heritage of protecting civil rights in our state. Ensuring that people are able to correct their birth certificate is key to supporting transgender Coloradans and protecting the rights and interests of the transgender community. I urge you to support House Bill 1039. Thank you.

Submitted by: Karla Gonzales Garcia, Policy Director, Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR), 303-393-0382