



HUMAN
RIGHTS
CAMPAIGN®

The Honorable Sen. Kwame Raoul
Chair, Senate Committee on Judiciary
123 Capitol Building
Springfield, Illinois 62706

May 11, 2015

Re: SUPPORT for HB 3552, Relating to Gender Identity and Disposition of Remains

Dear Chairperson Raoul and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary:

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC), on behalf of its nearly 75,000 members in Illinois, thanks you for holding a hearing on HB 3552, a measure that will ensure that transgender people are respected after death. We urge you to pass this important legislation.

The Human Rights Campaign is America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) equality. By inspiring and engaging all Americans, HRC strives to end discrimination against LGBT citizens and realize a nation that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for all. As an advocate of equal rights for all members of the LGBT community, HRC believes that the appropriate names and genders of transgender people should be respected, both through the issuance of appropriate identification and also after death.

This measure would modify Illinois's existing Disposition of Remains Act to allow transgender people to provide written directions to the person responsible for carrying out the decedent's funeral and disposition of remains which ensure that the decedent's identity is respected. Specifically, the directions may include instructions pertaining to appearance, chosen name, and gender pronouns.

Moreover, the transgender person is not first required to change their name or gender identity on other legal documents, which can be difficult or prohibitively expensive for many people. Nationally, only 1 in 5 transgender people (21%) have been able to update all their identification documents and records, including birth certificates, to reflect their appropriate name and gender.¹

Many transgender people face rejection by or isolation from their next of kin, or they fear stigmatization due to their gender identity or expression. Some transgender people do not reveal their transgender status due to concerns about discrimination, harassment, and violence.

¹ Grant, Jaime M., Lisa A. Mottet, Justin Tanis, Jack Harrison, Jody L. Herman, and Mara Keisling. *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*. Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011. Available at http://endtransdiscrimination.org/PDFs/NTDS_Report.pdf.

This measure, through a simple legal change, will provide solace to transgender people facing end of life, in that it will ensure that their names and genders are respected after death.

Thank you for allowing us to provide testimony on this important legislation which will improve the lives of transgender citizens in Illinois and help ensure respect for transgender people after death. If you should have any questions regarding HRC's support for HB 3552, please contact me at 202-572-8960 or by email at Alison.Gill@hrc.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AG', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Alison Gill, Esq.
Senior Legislative Counsel
Human Rights Campaign