

Randy Thomasson Testimony Opposing SB 179
July 10, 2017, California State Assembly Transportation Committee

Mr. Chair and members, my name is Randy Thomasson. I'm president of Campaign for Children and Families, which has been serving California families since 1999.

If you support law and order, and if you oppose identity fraud, you should not support this bill. Because allowing unverified identities to be subjectively altered, without limit, is a fraudster's dream.

Current law on gender changes requires three standards of verification: first, evidence of clinically appropriate treatment for the purpose of gender transition; second, verification from a licensed physician; third, court approval before anyone's sex can be changed on a birth certificate.

Yet SB 179 eliminates these facts and verification requirements, and instead says people can alter their birth certificates by paying only \$11 and filing a simple form subjectively claiming that they're male, female, or "nonbinary." Zero verification required.

Current law requires a verified gender-change petition to be filed with the county court where the petitioner resides for the verification of the court. But SB 179 permits any adult to demand that their gender be changed in any of California's 58 counties and requires that (quote) "the petitioner's affidavit shall be accepted as conclusive proof of gender change" and that (quote) "the court shall grant the petition without a hearing." This easy-in, easy-out gender change, and elimination of all current verification requirements, opens the door to identity fraud.

Imagine how criminals could exploit this. "John Jones" could easily change his birth certificate to "female" or "nonbinary" with the name "Emily Eaton." But "she" doesn't change "his" driver's license. So he can have future arrests avoided or criminal charges thrown out because "his" was a mistaken identity arrest. If people can subjectively and repeatedly change their identities -- anytime, anywhere -- you've just opened up Pandora's Box.

What's more, if one's sex can be officially "changed" by simply -- and even repeatedly -- filing an \$11 form, it's going to be a lot harder to accurately identify the accused in open court. Proper verification always involves a third party, yet SB 179 magically transforms a subjective, unsubstantiated claim into (quote) "conclusive proof" in the eyes of the law.

Chairman Frazier, your 2014 bill, AB 935, went the right direction by allowing veterans to prove their military service on their driver's license, by first achieving and receiving verification from a County Veteran Service Officer. Verification is essential, since there are numerous people, including political candidates, who have fraudulently claimed military service.

Similarly, this year, this house passed AB 638 in an attempt to combat immigration fraud by legally requiring definition, confirmation, and verification of the true legal status of immigration consultants. Again, proper verification always involves a third party.

In conclusion, please oppose SB 179, which would increase identity fraud by making it harder for financial institutions, police and courts to determine that you really are who you say you are.