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I am writing to express serious concerns regarding the proposed changes to the passport application form, specifically concerning the gender marker options. The current proposal, by limiting options or requiring specific documentation, creates potential hardships and safety risks for transgender and gender non-conforming individuals.

My primary concern is the potential for a mismatched gender identifier between a passport and other forms of identification, or even a person's lived reality. This discrepancy can lead to a variety of negative consequences, ranging from minor inconveniences to serious threats to safety.

For example, a mismatch can cause delays and questioning during security screenings at airports. While this may seem like a minor inconvenience, these interactions can be humiliating and invasive, particularly for transgender individuals. More seriously, a mismatched gender marker can lead to denial of services, including medical care, housing, or even entry into a foreign country. In countries with discriminatory laws against transgender people, this discrepancy could expose individuals to harassment, detention, or even violence. News articles have documented instances of transgender travelers facing such difficulties. [I am attaching a PDF containing a relevant news article detailing such an incident for the regulatory record.]

Furthermore, requiring specific medical documentation to change the gender marker on a passport poses another set of challenges. Accessing such documentation can be difficult and expensive for many transgender individuals. This requirement places an undue burden on transgender applicants and may effectively deny them the ability to obtain a passport that accurately reflects their gender identity.

The purpose of a passport is to provide accurate identification and facilitate international travel. The agency's duty is to ensure that all citizens, regardless of gender identity, can obtain a passport that serves this purpose. The proposed changes to the form, by creating obstacles and potential dangers for transgender individuals, fail to meet this obligation. I urge the agency to reconsider these changes and implement a process that is inclusive, respectful, and ensures the safety and dignity of all applicants. I am also contacting my representatives in Congress to express these concerns and request their support. I believe that a clear and inclusive process for gender marker changes is essential to upholding the rights and safety of transgender citizens.