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Hello,

I'm writing to sincerely request that the Department of State reconsider the change to US Passport form DS-11 that will request the applicant's "biological sex at birth," providing only options for "male" and "female."

From a purely scientific, non-political point of view, there are more than two biological sexes. Around 1.7% of people are born with intersex traits. These include sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, hormonal patterns, and chromosomal patterns that are inconsistent with what a typical person might consider a strictly male or female body. 1.7% sounded like a small number to me, until I realized that this is about 1 in 50 people. For another way to easily visualize how common this is, there are about as many intersex people as there are redheads in the world.

For this reason alone, limiting the options on official US citizen documentation to only "male" and "female"—when a significant number of US citizens do not fit within that biological binary—would be forcing a significant number of citizens to attest to information about themselves that would be inaccurate. It seems odd that the state dept would request highly biological biographical information, and then literally force up to 2% of US citizens to give an incorrect answer by not offering more detailed options.

Following this line of logic, then, it seems to be wholly inappropriate to demand that US citizens identify their sex at birth at all.

Think: The reason most of us didn't have a few dozen high school classmates (for example) who loudly identified as "intersex, not male or female at birth!" is because many of those 2% of intersex individuals are living their everyday American lives as boys or girls, men or women. This is reflective of each person's gender identities -- whether that was the gender identity that they were initially raised as, or a gender identity that they adopted at a later stage in life.

Indicating a person's gender, age, eye color, and hair color, and an image of their face on an official document are important for the purpose of establishing a basic and credible description of what that person looks like (CLOTHED, importantly!) for the purpose of international travel. Attempting to force all Americans applying for passports, whether they are intersex, male, or female, to be identified by a biological characteristic that was true when they were newborns and may have no relevance at all to that person's current external appearance / gender identity, is really doing a disservice to the entire point of creating a basic set of visual data points that help establish whether the person standing in front of a Border Patrol official is the person listed in the passport. Would it make sense to require folks to list their eye color and hair color at birth? My son was born with blond hair and blue eyes, before both naturally darkened to a brown. Describing him on a passport with his "at birth" characteristics vs how he appears today as a teenager would cause major issues with a mismatch between what he looks like and how he would be described.

I believe that if the State Dept pursues this change to US Passports, that they will be undoing the entire point of biographical data on passports for purely ideological reasons, which will cause untold amounts of difficulty for millions of Americans. Asking our citizens to continue to self-identify with biographical information that is currently accurate, including gender IDENTITY, is correct.