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Hello, my name is Rachael R. and I am submitting public comment regarding "U.S. Passport Renewal Application for Eligible Individuals" (OMB CONTROL NUMBER:1405-0020). I am a licensed clinical social worker serving transgender and gender diverse community members in Pennsylvania. Much of my career and education over the past 20 years has been oriented around supporting the rights and well-being of women and LGBTQAI+ people. I have been working directly in gender affirming care the past 5.5 years and am fortunate to know trans people both my professional and personal lives.

I believe that two of the biggest responsibilities the United States government has to its citizens is to promote and protect their freedom and their safety. Keeping transgender people from being able to choose and update the gender/sex designation on their U.S. passport is in direct contradiction to those responsibilities. Not only does this change restrict U.S. citizen's freedom to have their travel documents match their gender but it also makes them less safe in the United States and abroad. Transgender people are over four times more likely than cisgender people to experience violent victimization, including rape, sexual assault, and aggravated or simple assault, according to a study by the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law. I have personally known transgender people who have been stalked, attacked, and killed because they were transgender.

Removing the freedom to choose and update the gender/sex designation to a U.S. passports sends a message to all of the American public that our government does not care about our freedom or our safety, and is willing to harm its own citizens unnecessarily for political purposes. This flies in the face of American values and if allowed to stand will be a stain on our country. I am asking those responsible for this decision to uphold freedom and safety by allowing U.S. citizens to choose the gender/sex designation on their U.S. passport.

Sincerely,

-Rachael R., LCSW, MPH