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I am writing on behalf of the Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition, the oldest transgender advocacy organization in the United States. We have represented and advocated for transgender, nonbinary, and gender-expansive people in Massachusetts since 2001. We have successfully fought for civil rights and public accommodations protections for all transgender people of Massachusetts and have recently expanded our mission to include fighting for lived equity and building economic, political, and cultural power for all transgender, nonbinary, and gender expansive people.

We are writing to request that the State Department reinstate the previous rules that allowed passport applicants to choose a self-identified sex definition. The State Department's proposed rules are based on an outmoded, scientifically inaccurate, and dangerous concept of sex.

First, the rigid requirement that all passports must reflect one's assigned sex at birth exposes transgender and intersex passport holders to forced outing, which can prove dangerous. For example, a trans man with a full beard and balding hair would now be forced to carry an "F" passport, even if he had been living in his gender identity for twenty, thirty, or even forty years. Instead of quietly living his life, he must out himself as trans every time he travels outside the country. Similarly, a trans woman who has been on hormone therapy for decades and blends in completely with the general population would be forced to carry an "M" passport. This could place her in significant danger of harassment or worse, especially in countries that are more hostile to LGBTQ+ people. Regardless of the administration's views of transgender people, it is morally unconscionable to place US citizens at unnecessary risk during travel.

Second, there are people whose biology does not fit easily into a male-female binary: intersex people, who may have any number of chromosomal or genital configurations. The X sex designation was in part intended to accommodate members of this population, and became an option because of litigation against the State Department by Dana Zzyym, who is an intersex Navy veteran. Since this marker arose out of litigation, it is possible that its removal is in violation of the court ruling.

Third, opposition to transgender recognition is an ideological standpoint in itself, not a merely objective stance. There is an increasing body of evidence that transgender identities are scientifically and psychologically valid, and the most appropriate treatment for gender dysphoria is to affirm people's gender identity and provide them medical treatment that brings their sex and gender into congruence. To deny categorically that trans identities are real is akin to insisting that the world was created in six days, even when a preponderance of evidence states that the world is billions of years old and humanity is a product of slow, gradual evolution. The Trump administration and State Department are operating on undisguised animus toward trans people, not a dispassionate desire to "restore biological reality" to the government. Trans people are part of biological reality. The State Department should remain neutral, deriving its policies from sound science that acknowledges the complexity of sex and gender, not sixth-grade biology.