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I would like to comment on the changes to passport renewal policies with reference to the use of a gender marker on passports suggested in the misleadingly-named ""Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government" executive order, which proposes to mandate the use of the individual's assigned sex at birth.

A passport is meant to verify the identity and citizenship of the passport holder. The definition of gender proposed in the executive order, i.e., the ability to produce a particular gamete or the possession of a specific pair of chromosomes, as the determining factor to establish which sex/gender marker is used on a passport does not aid this process.

This definition of gender is based on a poor understanding of the complex reality of human biology and a fear-based denial of the fact that intersex and transgender persons exist and have always existed. As an anthropologist, I can confirm that professionals in my own field, as well as sociologists, biologists, and medical professionals of all types have long established that gender is not the same as biological sex. The president has no education or expertise to refute this, and no authority over the English language writ large to declare the two words interchangeable.

Far from protecting women, or anyone else, this measure has the potential to expose Americans to invasive and abusive treatment. While clearly intended to target and marginalize transgender persons, it is equally likely to expose cis-gendered persons to such treatment if they fail to meet an arbitrary standard of sufficiently "feminine" or "masculine" appearance.

If gender markers on passports are truly creating problems and confusion, I strongly suggest removing such a marker from passports and identification documents altogether. There are much more reliable ways, e.g., modern facial recognition technology, for establishing a person's identity that do not require examining their genitals or analyzing their chromosomes.

Gender should not be a determining factor in establishing identity and citizenship in any case. As far as I know, biological males and females are equally American citizens. I hope it stays that way.