

## **Written Comment to the Cook County Board's Human Relations Committee in Support of Ordinance 21-2215 regarding Gender Inclusive Documents and Forms**

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I am Myles Brady Davis, the Press Secretary and Director of Communications at Equality Illinois, the state's civil rights organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer Illinoisans.

Thank you, Chairperson Deer, Vice-Chairperson Morrison, and members of the Cook County Board's Human Relations Committee, for the opportunity to submit this written testimony in support of Ordinance 21-2215. I appreciate Commissioner Morrison's leadership on this ordinance.

In the Land of Lincoln, our values are justice, fairness, and equality under the law – the same values that have contributed to Illinois being the anchor of legal equality and justice in the Midwest.

Documents, whether they be personal identity documents or Cook County forms, should reflect a person's authentic self. By providing gender-affirming opportunities on county documents for individuals to select "non-binary" as a gender option, a gender-neutral title like Mx., and inclusive personal pronouns, this ordinance would make it possible for trans and non-binary individuals to be their authentic selves on Cook County forms.

This is critical to helping trans and non-binary Illinoisans be secure in their persons and affirmed for who they are. This update to forms can help prevent misgendering, which often leads to other kinds of pervasive violence. For instance, according to the US Trans Survey of 2015, 34% of trans people in Illinois who have shown an identification card with a name or gender that did not match their gender presentation were verbally harassed, denied benefits or services, asked to leave, or assaulted.

We trans people, including non-binary and genderqueer people, have always been a natural and vibrant part of our human history and human diversity. This ordinance can take a tangible step to end institutionalized gender exclusionary practices and affirm the dignity and safety of trans and non-binary residents in Cook County.

I urge you to support this ordinance.

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