

New York's Laws Fail to Recognize Gender Neutrality

May 10, 2023

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"How are you supposed to be believed about the harm

that you experience when people don't even believe that you exist? [1]

The legal system has long been criticized for its lack of inclusivity and support for marginalized communities. One such community is the gender non-binary or genderqueer community. People who identify as they/them often encounter challenges in accessing justice, as the legal system is structured around a gender binary.

New York's laws assume that individuals identify as either male or female, and they often fail to recognize, let alone support, those who do not conform to these traditional gender roles. In New York State, there is currently no legal recognition of non-binary gender markers like "they/them" on government issued identification documents. As a result, people who identify as they/them are often stripped of their rights and may face discrimination and exclusion in various aspects of their lives, including access to healthcare, education, employment, and housing.

In addition, legal documents, such as identification cards, passports, and birth certificates, also present challenges for those who identify as they/ them, as these documents require gender marker designations. This results in many people being misgendered or having to conform to a gender identity that does not accurately represent who they are.

Moreover, the legal system's lack of support for those who identify as they/them is particularly concerning when it comes to cases involving domestic violence and sexual assault. These individuals often face additional barriers to accessing justice and may be further marginalized by the legal system.

Opposition From Conservative Groups

There has been some opposition from conservative groups who argue that recognizing non-binary gender markers on identification documents goes against traditional gender norms and could lead to confusion or fraud. However, advocates for non-binary recognition argue that it is a necessary step towards greater inclusivity and recognition of all individuals, regardless of their gender identity. Ultimately, the decision to recognize non-binary gender markers on identification documents will be up to lawmakers and policymakers.

There are solutions, however, to address the concerns raised by conservative groups regarding non-binary recognition on identification documents.

One potential solution could be to provide educational resources and training for government officials and individuals on the importance of recognizing non-binary gender markers. Another solution could be to implement safeguards to prevent fraud, such as requiring additional documentation or verification.

Some other types of safeguards that could be implemented include biometric identification technologies, such as facial recognition, fingerprinting, or iris scanning. These technologies can be used to verify an individual's identity and prevent fraud. However, it is important to balance the need for security with the need for inclusivity. This requires a careful consideration of the potential impact on non-binary individuals and ensuring that any safeguards do not place an undue burden on them. It also requires ongoing dialogue and collaboration between stakeholders to ensure that the needs of all individuals are being met.

In Conclusion

The inclusion of non-binary gender markers in government-issued documents would have a significant impact on the lives and experiences of non-binary individuals in New York State. It would provide them with greater recognition and visibility and help reduce discrimination and exclusion based on gender identity. This could also lead to improvements in healthcare, housing, employment, and other services that are often difficult for non-binary individuals to access.

Ultimately, it will require a collaborative effort between lawmakers, advocates, and community members to find a solution that addresses concerns while also promoting inclusivity and recognition of non binary individuals. There are ongoing efforts to push for legislative changes and updates to the current system to be more inclusive of non-binary individuals. Organizations like the National Center for Transgender Equality and the New York Civil Liberties Union are actively advocating for these changes.

It is important for non-binary New Yorkers to consult with a lawyer who has experience navigating the legal issues related to gender identity. This can include issues related to changing legal documents, accessing healthcare services and other services, and experiencing discrimination or harassment.

[1] -- Alok Vaid-Menon, *Beyond the Gender Binary*