

## A Push Is On To Get HIV Out of Pa. Criminal Code

### Lawmakers, Advocates Renew Campaign To Strike Down Law as Stigmatizing, Outdated

The campaign to strike a rarely used and thoroughly discredited Pennsylvania criminal code provision that stigmatizes people living with HIV is ramping up among legislators and advocates.

PA House Bill 632 and a companion Senate measure would strike down a 1990s law making it a felony if a person living with HIV is convicted of involvement in prostitution.

"The law will finally stop treating [a] medical condition as a crime," the bill's co-sponsors Rep. Ben Waxman and Rep. Jose Giral said in a joint statement. Both are Philadelphia

Democrats.

In the statement, the co-sponsors also said House Bill 632 "strengthens public health [because when] people aren't afraid of being criminalized for their status, they're more likely to seek care, and that keeps transmission rates low. It also updates our criminal code to reflect modern medicine and human rights."

Waxman introduced the House bill in 2024. The companion Senate bill, SB647, was introduced last April by Sen. Vincent Hughes, D-Philadelphia.

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## The Battle for Safehouse Continues

The federal lawsuit that has stymied Safehouse, a pioneering effort to reduce Philadelphia overdose deaths, will be seven years old on February 26.

"The Safehouse case is not over," Ronda B. Goldfein, executive director of the AIDS Law Project, said in a recent interview.

"We are still fighting because we believe there is no higher priority than saving lives."

Goldfein said some of the estimated 8,500 overdose deaths in Philadelphia since 2019 "could have been

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## Charlotte Hollander, Devoted Advocate, Dies at 76



Charlotte Hollander, a tireless legal advocate who most recently worked as a Senior Staff Attorney with the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania, died Sept. 5.

She was 76 and resided in Northfield, Atlantic County, NJ.

Charlotte dedicated her career to fairness, justice, and improving the quality of

life for others. She was a legal services lifer.

Posts on social media by colleagues and friends spoke of Ms. Hollander as "wonderful," "immensely helpful and patient" with clients, and a "devoted" advocate "for those who felt they didn't have a voice."

Charlotte "loved everybody, and everybody loved

her," Peggy Neumann, one of the commenters, said in an interview. The two met when both worked at the AIDS Coalition of Southern New Jersey.

"What I wrote about Charlotte's infectious laugh, sense of humor, smile that lights up a room and huge heart ... sums her up. She is greatly missed," Neumann said.

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# Irv Silverman's Gold Ring

Friends,

If you've spent any part of your life in the Philly region, you likely feel a personal relationship with **Pierre Robert**, who started broadcasting on WMMR in 1981. When he died in his home Oct. 29 at the age of 70, the accolades began pouring in.

**Gov. Josh Shapiro** sent official condolences. City Councilmember **Rue Landau** issued a resolution honoring Pierre. And Councilmember **Mark Squilla** is preparing to designate a Center City street Pierre Robert Way.

Here at the AIDS Law Project, we remember Pierre as the ever-charming emcee of our fundraisers. He added star power to our parties, and our guests left thrilled to have met Philadelphia royalty.

We also remember Pierre as the devoted friend of our late client **Irv Silverman**, the plaintiff in a significant AIDS Law Project case from three decades ago when we successfully sued a Center City gym for kicking him out because he had HIV.

Pierre and Irv met when both lived in California. When Irv's HIV became too much to manage on his own, he returned to Philadelphia and into the care of his sister, **Kim Silverman**. Once back



**Kim Silverman** took this photo of her brother, **Irv Silverman**, with **Pierre Robert** in her South Philly home.

in the area, he reconnected with his old friend Pierre. Irv was frequently hospitalized at the end of his life, and Pierre was a constant visitor. On the December day in 1994 when Irv took his last breath at St. Agnes Hospital, Broad and Passyunk, Pierre was there. As he stood in the hall with Kim, the nursing staff handed her the gold ring that Irv always wore. Kim handed it to Pierre.

Pierre wore Irv Silverman's

ring everywhere. He used to say he was bringing Irv to all the special events. Pierre helped us fund-raise because we helped Irv and others treated unfairly for their virus.

Thank you, Pierre. You were a sparkling light in the world.

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Ms. Hollander was born on January 24, 1949, to **Sheila** and **Jack Hollander**. She was devoted to them throughout their lives as well as to her niece, **Jacqueline Hollander**, who also is deceased.

She is survived by her brother, **Howard Hollander**; her daughter and son-in-law, **Amelia** and **Samuel H. Dodson IV**; and her grandson, **Samuel H. Dodson V**.

In an obituary posted on the website of Goldsteins' Rosenberg's Funer-

al Directors, in Atlantic County, Ms. Hollander was described as "a trusted ally who never stopped fighting" for the underserved, as well as a "tireless advocate who touched countless lives with her humor, compassion, and fierce sense of justice."

"Even at 76, Charlotte was still working, guided by empathy and an unwavering commitment to justice. Her contributions were deeply valued by her colleagues ... who expressed heartfelt appreciation for Charlotte's decades of

dedication and impact."

The obituary noted that Ms. Hollander's life "was also deeply shaped by her Jewish faith. She was a proud supporter of Temple Solel in Bowie, Maryland, led by **Rabbi Steve Weisman**. Whether attending services in person during family visits — often around Jewish holidays — or joining virtually, Charlotte found community and strength in her congregation. She was especially devoted to supporting [her grandson] Sammy's Jewish education."



## Protecting Benefits for Disabled Workers

“Mary” came to the AIDS Law Project after her Social Security Disability (SSD) benefits were terminated. She had been assessed a \$26K overpayment. And she had not received an SSD check in several months.

Mary was working as a community participant in a medical research study at the suggestion of her medical case manager.

Her full-time co-workers were expected to meet certain production benchmarks. But due to Mary’s disability and the value of her insights and experience to the research team, she was allowed to take as much time off as necessary.

Mary, who also was given flexibility to complete assignments, was expected to do about 70% as much work as her co-workers.

These adjustments to her schedule and reduced production expectations constitute a work subsidy, **Jacob Eden**, a senior staff attorney with the AIDS Law Project, said in his summary of the case.

“We successfully appealed the termination based on this subsidy, showing she did not work over the allowed limit.

“As a result, her ongoing benefits were restored, her \$15K in missed benefits were paid, and her \$26K overpayment was erased,” said Jacob.

“John” is also a subsidized disabled employee. His income from a Jefferson University Hospital job resulted in the termination of his SSD benefits and a \$20,629 overpayment.

“We requested that SSA reverse the termination based on his subsidy, and restore his benefits. His benefits resumed and he received \$7K for the period that his benefits were suspended. Additionally, his overpayment was erased,” Jacob said.

“Our representation enabled both of these disabled individuals to do meaningful work and generate income, without losing the disability benefits that supported them.”

*For clients of the AIDS Law Project, getting and keeping affordable housing is one of the most common challenges. Two cases in point:*

## Knowledge of the Law Overcomes New Tenant's Last-Minute Obstacle

When a transgender individual arrived at a South Jersey apartment complex where she had been approved for move-in on Aug. 1, an employee refused to accept her documentation for a third-party payment arrangement for the security deposit and first month’s rent.

“Your company performed all background checks and accepted [the individual] as a tenant,” the late **Charlotte Hollander**, then a senior staff attorney with the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania, wrote in a letter to the landlord.

The prospective tenant already had “discussed the fact that her move-in payments were to be paid by third parties, a fact that was

confirmed by promissory note and email,” Charlotte wrote.

“It is settled law in NJ ... that a landlord may not refuse confirmed offers of payments on behalf of tenants from third parties.

“In addition, the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination forbids a landlord from refusing commitments of payment from bona fide charitable organizations or rental assistance.”

In sharing the news with her colleagues, Charlotte wrote: “After many phone calls and assurances, the client was able to move in today.

“This was important [because] today was her last day at the motel.”

## Ensuring a Promise Is Kept Removes Threat of Eviction

“Jane” and her husband “Bill” always paid their rent on time. They are low-income seniors and mindful of the importance of never missing a rent payment. They were shocked to receive an eviction complaint alleging that they had not paid a month’s rent and came to the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania looking for help.

AIDS Law Project housing attorney **Tianna Anderson** met with the couple and they explained they were promised a free month’s rent in exchange for an earlier move-in date, but they no longer had the paperwork confirming the offer. Compounding the problem was that

the building ownership had since changed property management.

Tiana tracked down the building’s former property management company and was able to secure written statements from two employees confirming that the tenants had been offered a waiver of their first month’s rent.

She presented this evidence to the landlord’s attorneys. The debt was erased and the eviction complaint withdrawn. In reviewing the rental ledger, Tianna also noticed that the tenants had made an overpayment. With Tianna’s help, in addition to securing their housing, a credit was issued for their next month’s rent.

# THE AIDS LAW PROJECT

## Meet the New Editor of *Good Counsel*

### Kevin Riordan steps into the role, inspired by the memory of an old friend

My opportunity to serve as the editor of *Good Counsel* arose two days before the 30th anniversary of my best friend Bob's death from AIDS.

He and I were born five days apart to mothers who were telephone operators. We met as first-graders and instantly were brothers.

Bob came out during college; I followed a year later.

He went to New York and I moved to Philly.

Both of us rode that great wave of LGBTQ+ boomers who migrated to urban America in the 1970s.

Those were the days when we regularly typed and mailed long letters to each other about the crazy joys of being young and gay in the big city, celebrating our freedoms in community with so many others.

So many of whom would be lost after AIDS manifested itself in 1981.

By 1990, after living on a shoe-string in pre-trendy but increasingly expensive Manhattan neighborhoods for 15 years, Bob – a witty, distinctive, and adventurous artist – went back to our Western Massachusetts hometown.

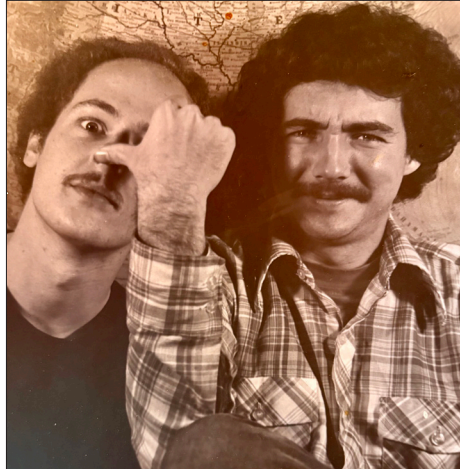


Photo by Jack Zaloga

**Kevin Riordan**, right, with his friend **Bob** in New York City, circa 1978.

He was diagnosed in the spring of 1995 and died the following October. He was one among the estimated 50,000 Americans and 890,000 people elsewhere in the world whose lives HIV claimed that year.

In the three decades since I've often wondered what Bob would think about the revolutionary changes in HIV care, LGBTQ+ rights, politics, and pop culture.

He'd certainly be sorry to have missed the arrival and widespread success of anti-HIV drugs. He'd be heartened by marriage equality, as well as by so much queer visibility in the media and beyond.

Bob would be furious about any pushback against the rights of women, brown and Black people, trans and other queer folk, and immigrants. He'd also be grateful **Patti Smith** and **Grace Slick** are still with us. He'd give **Chappell Roan** a thumbs up.

I'd like to think Bob would also be pleased about my new editing and writing assignment, having teased me for years with "if you ever get your own column, you should call it 'I SAY.'"

So in honor of Bob I say hello, and thank you, to the staff and interns at the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania.

Since this nonprofit public interest law firm was founded in 1988, it has since risen to the defense of more than 25,000 people living with HIV.

Needless to say I'm honored to be asked to help in this work.

I also say hello and thank you to the donors and supporters who make possible the AIDS Law Project's free legal work and programs that advocate for and assist people who face housing, eviction, addiction, immigration, or other challenges.

To Bob, I say: I'm thinking of you as I write this column.

I hear your voice, see your face, and feel your energy in the connection we still share.

A connection with a life of its own. Thank you, Bob.

## Digital Reboot Revitalizes Statewide HIV Policy Collab

The HIV Policy Collab – a statewide digital reboot of an information-seeking/sharing network – "is progressing well," said **Liam Sliva**, a legal assistant with the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania.

"In under a year, not only have we grown to 285 members, and still growing, we also had significant turnout for our recent Changes to PA SNAP webinar," Liam said.

The online event drew 260 people, "in large part thanks to the ongoing participation of our many HIV Policy

Collab's members who readily signed-up for it," he said.

"We already had an [existing] network across Pennsylvania to start it up again with," Liam noted.

The AIDS Law Project established the PA HIV Collaborative in the 1990s, but in recent years the logistical complexities of regular face-to-face meetings for a statewide membership became an issue. So the collaborative was put on pause.

It was revived as the Collab last

spring, thanks to the efforts of Sliva, a Temple University intern; **Joelle Williams**, a Harvard intern; and AIDS Law Project Executive Director **Ronda B. Goldfein**.

To join Collab 2.0, email: [collab2.oadmin@aidslawpa.org](mailto:collab2.oadmin@aidslawpa.org). Please share this email with anyone who may be interested in joining.

Subscriptions may take up to three days to process. Please check your spam folder if you don't receive the listserv welcome email.

# THE AIDS LAW PROJECT AT WORK

## Coming Soon: Free Monthly Legal Clinics for Seniors

The AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania will launch the JCA Senior Legal Clinic in January.

The first in the series of free monthly clinics is set for 2 to 4 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 13 at the John C. Anderson Apartments, 251 S. 13th St. near Spruce in Center City.

AIDS Law Project supervising paralegal **SayBria Nelson** and executive director **Ronda B. Goldfein** will staff the service.

The clinic will help tenants with their legal needs, with a focus on preparation of healthcare and estate planning documents, SayBria said.

Healthcare planning documents include a living will and a durable medical power of attorney.

Estate documents generally include a last will and testament.

Most of the residents

at the 56-unit building are LGBTQ and some are living with HIV. The Gayborhood landmark is named for **John C. Anderson**, a pathbreaking gay member of the Philadelphia City Council.

SayBria noted that many seniors don't have ready access to legal services. And LGBTQ seniors need to know that the attorney preparing their estate documents is well informed about, and sensitive to, HIV or other issues.

"Bringing this clinic to the residents and allowing them time and space to get their documents done is a real service," said SayBria.

As a participant in a National HIV & Aging Day event sponsored by the Philadelphia Department of Public Health on September 18, she heard concerns directly from seniors in attendance.



Photo with client permission

AIDS Law Project supervising paralegal **SayBria Nelson** meets with a client to complete healthcare planning documents for National HIV & Aging Day. The September event was sponsored by the Philadelphia Department of Public Health.

"Trust is an issue," SayBria said. "Seniors need to trust the person who is assisting them. They need to feel confident that their wishes will be followed by the people they're listing in their documents."

Knowing that documents must be in place, yet feeling

unsure of how to proceed, can create anxiety. But once the process is completed, "it's a big relief to have this box checked off," said SayBria.

"I love doing estate work," she added. "It provides a voice to people who might not have had one."

### Continued from Page 1

prevented" had Safehouse been allowed to open. It would have been the first facility of its kind in the country; since then, safe injection sites opened in New York City (2022) and Rhode Island (2024).

As envisioned, Philadelphia's Safehouse would provide people living in addiction with comprehensive harm reduction services. The professionally staffed outpatient facility would not dispense illegal drugs but would if necessary provide medical supervision

### GOOD COUNSEL BY E-MAIL

Want to get the newsletter electronically? Sign up at [AIDSLawPa.org/e-newsletter](https://AIDSLawPa.org/e-newsletter).

for their off-street use.

Medically Assisted Treatment (MAT) initiation and recovery counseling would be available on site. Referrals to primary care and HIV and HCV treatment, as well as to social and legal services and housing opportunities, also would be offered.

During **President Trump's** first term, US Attorney **William M. McSwain** filed suit to stop the Safehouse project, claiming it violated federal law, including what's commonly called the "crack house statute."

"We answered that complaint and said 'we're not doing that, we're saving lives,'" Goldfein said. "We don't have an illegal purpose."

In the most recent developments, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals remanded the Safehouse case back to federal court in Philadelphia, where a

meeting among lawyers for both sides before **Judge Gerald A. McHugh** is anticipated.

"Our Safehouse team is gratified that the Third Circuit opinion ... recognizes what we have always believed: The law safeguards our mission to preserve human life in an unprecedented overdose crisis," said Goldfein.

"The decision is an important milestone not only for Safehouse, but for all community-based organizations that save lives by evidence-based, compassionate harm-reduction strategies."

*Safehouse is represented by Ilana H. Eisenstein and Ben C. Fabens-Lassen of DLA Piper; Ronda B. Goldfein and Adrian M. Lowe of the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania; and attorneys Peter Goldberger and Seth F. Kreimer.*

# THE AIDS LAW PROJECT

Continued from Page 1

The legislature already has removed all other references to HIV in the criminal code – which, like the remaining reference, were misguided efforts to reduce HIV transmission. No credible research links harsher penalties with a reduction in HIV transmission.

The AIDS Law Project and five other organizations are sending a letter urging the House to approve the bill, which is currently in committee.

“Pennsylvania is one of nine states that still punish people

charged with prostitution more harshly if living with HIV,” the letter says.

“HB632 would modernize Pennsylvania law by eliminating such outdated sentencing enhancements based on HIV status.”

The letter also is signed by the PA HIV Justice Alliance; the Positive Women's Network; Girl U Can Do It; SERO; and the Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation.

Supporters also intend to travel to the state capital early in 2026 to lobby individual legislators and answer questions.

**ANSWERS IN THE PALM OF OUR HANDS:** This palm card makes the case for HB632 on one side and showcases organizations backing the bill on the other.

## Support HB632: End HIV Stigma in Pennsylvania

Prostitution is a misdemeanor in Pennsylvania and most states — yet Pennsylvania is one of nine states that still punish people living with HIV more harshly than others charged with prostitution.

Pennsylvania's felony enhancement was enacted in 1995 and has never served an effective law enforcement purpose. In the 30 years since its enactment, it's rarely been charged, and no credible research links harsher penalties for prostitution with a reduction in HIV transmission.

Over time, the Pennsylvania legislature, like that of most other states, has modernized its criminal code by removing stigmatizing references to HIV. This modernization follows guidance from the American Medical Association, the American Bar Association, and other professional organizations, based on the facts of how HIV is transmitted.

Only one reference to HIV in the Pennsylvania criminal code remains, and HB632 would remove it.

Pennsylvania has laws to punish those who harm others. Punishing people solely because they are living with HIV reinforces stigma, discourages people from getting tested and treated, and fuels the epidemic.

**It's time to remove stigma from the Pennsylvania criminal code.**

## Medicaid and SNAP: Major Changes Are Coming

The fluidity of many of the Trump administration's positions, as well as the frequent stalemates in the sharply divided Congress, have created uncertainty around major benefit programs such as SNAP and Medicaid.

For Medicaid, the most significant changes to eligibility, reporting, and work requirements are not expected to fully launch until 2027.

Able-bodied Medicaid recipients, ages 19 to 64, will be required to work 80 hours a month. This Medicaid work requirement won't begin until 2027. The frequency of Medicaid eligibility checks will increase to every six months starting Dec. 31, 2026.

Not so for SNAP: Some eligibility and other changes already are in place or coming soon.

Geographic waivers exempting some Pennsylvanians from work requirements to receive SNAP, the federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (once known as food stamps) expired September 1.

Other exemptions have narrowed effective November 1. Able-bodied adults up to age 64 (compared to the previous 54) will have to work over 80 hours a month to receive benefits. Veterans and people experiencing homelessness will no longer be exempt from work requirements.

Parents with a child under 18 were previously exempt from work requirements to receive SNAP. The law changes the exemption to parents with a child under 14.

The work requirements and other changes are in place, although suspension of benefits due to the government shut-down made it difficult to assess the impact.

The AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania suggests that people in need of benefits should apply for Medicaid and SNAP assistance.

Please check the AIDS Law Project's website ([aidslawpa.org](http://aidslawpa.org)) for updates or call us at 215-587-9377 if you have questions.

# ABOUT US

## WHAT WE DO

The AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania is a nonprofit, public-interest law firm. We publish *Good Counsel* semiannually for our friends, volunteers and colleagues committed to protecting the rights of people with HIV and those at risk of HIV. Last year, we worked on about 2,000 legal issues, nearly all from people with HIV. We help people navigate the legal system, the welfare system, the housing system, and the worlds of public and private insurance. We provide education and training to professionals who work with people living with HIV.

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On Facebook: [AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania](https://www.facebook.com/AIDSLawProjectofPennsylvania)  
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## HOW TO HELP

Remember us at workplace giving time. When you donor-designate in your workplace giving campaign, remember your neighbors served by the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania.

**United Way of SEPA:** Specific Care Option #09067  
**Combined Federal Campaign:** Donor Option #36027

# INSIDE THE AIDS LAW PROJECT

## New Paralegal Aims To Do 'A Lot of Good'

Shortly after graduation from Haverford College in May, **Nathan Schechter** began work as the public benefits paralegal at the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania.

"I'm interested in doing something societally beneficial," he said.

"The law is very powerful, and for that reason a lot of people have a negative opinion of it ... but I do think that in the right hands, such as here at the AIDS Law Project, it can do a lot of good."

In assisting clients with questions about or seeking to access public benefits such as Medicaid, Social Security, housing, or unemployment, "it's not a zero-sum game, like a lot of law can be," Nathan said.

In other words, no one loses when a client is able to access funding that has been dedicated to a purpose such as medical assistance



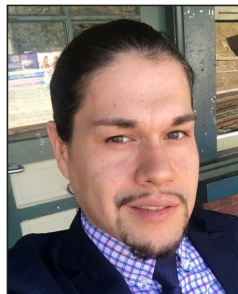
for those who qualify.

But automated systems that steer a phone caller with a simple question into seemingly endless voice-

mail menus and on-hold wait times can cause a client to give up on securing assistance, said Nathan.

"It's not easy for a lot of people who have the medical issues we are dealing with, not necessarily with HIV, but issues with aging, to handle all of the communications they have with agencies," he said.

The work of the AIDS Law Project "helps people stay on top of things ... so they can access benefits they already qualify for," said Nathan.



## BIDDING FAREWELL TO JOHN MARRERO

The AIDS Law Project is grateful for the service of paralegal **John Marrero** and wishes him all the best.



**OUR INTERNS:** The AIDS Law Project deeply appreciates the contributions of our Summer 2025 interns and wishes them all the best. From left: **Jordan Diamond**, University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School, class of 2027; **Jax Hebner**, Temple University Beasley School of Law, class of 2027; and **Laura Feeny**, Rutgers School of Law - Camden, class of 2027.



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Gifts received April 1, 2025 through September 30, 2025

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Robert Hanrahan  
Chris Huhn  
John Lee Turner

## Trump Policy on Passports for Trans People Takes Effect

Despite a continuing legal challenge, the Trump administration's policy barring trans people from obtaining passports that match their gender identity became effective Nov. 6.

"This is not a ban on trans people having passports, and it's not a ban on international travel by trans people," said **Adrian M. Lowe**, a senior staff attorney at the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania.

"But it's painful to travel with documents that don't reflect who you are."

On January 20, in compliance with an executive order Trump signed on his first day back in office, the U.S. State Department began barring people from obtaining a passport with anything other than the female or male designation assigned to them at birth.

The American Civil Liberties Union



filed a federal lawsuit in February challenging the state department's policy on behalf of transgender, nonbinary, and intersex people. A preliminary federal court injunction prohibiting application of the policy was issued on June 17.

But on November 6 the U.S. Supreme Court granted a Trump administration request to allow enforcement of the passport policy while the ACLU challenge continues.

"For most trans people, a passport is not a priority like a driver's license or making sure your name and ID are correct for work or other purposes," Lowe said, adding that court-ordered name changes are still allowed.

But for now, a gender marker can't be changed.

"If a person's name is Mary but her passport says she's a man, it's potentially dangerous... and the fear is going to be there," said Lowe.

"Trans people having accurate documents didn't create a problem, so the government isn't solving a problem. It's just being mean."