



## Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition

PO Box 301897, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

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617-778-0519

### Definitions

In the Boston ordinance and the proposed statewide legislation, “gender identity or expression” is defined as “a gender-related identity, appearance, expression, or behavior of an individual, regardless of the individual's assigned sex at birth.” This is consistent with Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination’s (MCAD) past decisions and existing laws.

A person’s **Gender Identity** is how someone identifies his/her own gender – a person’s inner sense of ‘being’ male or female. Most people, but not all, have a gender identity of “man” or “woman” which is also consistent with their assigned sex at birth. There are some people who feel their assigned sex at birth is not consistent with their own gender identity.

A person’s **Gender Expression** refers to how a person expresses their gender identity, or the cues people use to identify another person’s gender. This can include clothing, mannerisms, makeup, behavior, speech patterns, and more. There are some in society whose gender expression does not conform to traditional gender stereotypes what men or women should look or act.

**Transgender** is an umbrella term for people who transition from one gender to another and/or people who defy social expectations of how they should look, act, or identify based on their birth sex. This can include a range of people including: male-to-female (MTF) or female-to-male (FTM) transsexual people and, more generally, anyone whose gender identity or expression differs from conventional expectations of masculinity or femininity. Some transgender people experience their gender identity as incongruent with anatomical sex at birth.

**Traditional Gender Stereotypes:** Culturally defined code of acceptable behavior for men and women. Men/boys are to exhibit masculine gender presentation, behaviors, and social roles and women/girls are to exhibit feminine gender presentation, behaviors, and social roles.

### *Frequently Asked Questions*

#### **Are transgender people the same as gay/lesbian people?**

No. Transgender is about gender identity and gender expression where as gay, lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual/straight is about sexual orientation, which is emotional and physical attraction to others. While transgender people are sometimes assumed to be gay or lesbian based on stereotypes about gay men and lesbians, the terms are not interchangeable. Transgender people also have a sexual orientation, just as everyone else in society, which can be heterosexual (straight), bisexual, or gay or lesbian.



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### **Can I tell if someone is transgender?**

Not always. Some transgender people “pass” almost always as the gender they identify with and live as; there are many transgender people whom no one would know they are transgender or were assigned a different sex at birth, and who choose to keep their personal histories confidential. Others “pass” only occasionally or not at all due to a number of factors, such as access to transgender specific medical treatment. Sometimes transgender people are discriminated against or harassed because others suspect them to be transgender or gender variant. In other situations, transgender people are discriminated against or harassed because someone shares a transgender person’s history inappropriately with others, turning private medical information into gossip.

A transgender person does not have to disclose that they are transgender, just as others have the right to privacy about their identity, their medical status, or other information that is not pertinent in a given situation.

### **What is gender transition?**

Gender transition is a personal process in which a transgender/transsexual person goes through when they begin to live and identify as the gender they see themselves as. This process includes a social transition, which a person changing their gender expression, such as clothes and hairstyle; pronoun; and possibly their first name, to be reflective of the gender they are transitioning to. This process may also include support from therapist and a medical transition, which can be hormone replacement therapy and/or sex reassignment surgery.

For some transgender people, they may not access medical transition due to the prohibitive cost, access to providers, physical health issues, lack of health insurance coverage, and/or personal choice. The reality is that many transgender people live, present, and are accepted as the gender they see themselves as without medical transition, hormones, and/or sex re-assignment surgery.

### **Why do transgender people need legal protections?**

Transgender people in Massachusetts face high levels of discrimination and violence because of widespread prejudice and the assumption that transgender people are "outside" of the law's protections. This bill amends both non-discrimination laws and hates crime laws in order to comprehensively make clear that transgender individuals have equal protection under the law.

The baseline rates of discrimination against transgender people are consistently high. A review of six studies conducted between 1996 and 2006, in cities and regions on both coasts and the Midwest, showed the following ranges for experiences of discrimination based on gender identity<sup>1</sup>:

- 13%-56% of transgender people had been fired
- 13%-47% had been denied employment
- 22%-31% had been harassed, either verbally or physically, in the workplace

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<sup>1</sup> Badgett, M.V., Lau, Sears, and Ho. *Bias in the Workplace: Consistent Evidence of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Discrimination*. Los Angeles: The Williams Institute. June 2007.



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### About MTPC

Founded in 2001, the Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition, a non-profit organization, works to end discrimination on the basis of gender identity and gender expression. MTPC follows in the footsteps of *It's Time Massachusetts*, a transgender political organization that ceased to exist upon the passing of its founder. MTPC has chapters located in the Boston, Worcester County, North Shore, South Coast, and Western Mass, which are made up of community members, activists, students, parents, lawyers, educators, and workers. MTPC has a track record of leading successful advocacy campaigns for city ordinances prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender identity and gender expression this includes Boston (2002) and Northampton (2005).

MTPC is led by a Steering Committee made up of youth and adults who are self-identified as transgender/gender variant/genderqueer/intersex (majority) as well as non-transgender family members, partners, friends, and allies (minority). In 2008, MTPC hired its first full-time staff person, a Director.

### Mission and Values

The Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition (MTPC) is dedicated to ending discrimination on the basis of gender identity and gender expression.

We envision a world where persons of all genders are treated with respect and fully participate in all areas of society, free from fear of prohibition, harassment or violence based on their gender identity and/or expression. To that end we educate the public, advocate with state, local, and federal government, engage in political activism, and encourage empowerment of community members through collective action.

#### *MTPC values:*

- Promoting social and economic justice & equality;
- Working against all forms of oppression;
- Building broad-based participation and community power;
- Developing leaders and building coalitions;
- Drawing strength from diverse experiences and identities;
- Learning from our history and elders;
- Growing through challenge and critique;
- Including those who cannot be fully visible;
- Being accountable to the communities for which we work.