

Death Certificates May Soon Feature Preferred Gender Identity

Death certificates in California would be changed to reflect the gender identity of people at the time of their death rather than their sex at birth under a bill passed by lawmakers on Wednesday, the latest effort by the state to further the rights of transgender residents.

The bill, which passed the state senate on Wednesday and has already passed the state assembly, must now go back to the assembly for final approval of amendments before it is sent to Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown to be signed and become law.

It is one of several measures aimed at furthering the family rights of LGBT Californians passed this session, including a measure allowing same-sex couples to be listed as mother, father or parent on a child's birth certificate.

"Once we are deceased, we are often at the mercy of others to treat us with dignity," said California Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins, a Democrat from San Diego. "The very least we can do is ensure individuals are given basic human dignity by honoring their authentic selves when they pass so that more pain is not inflicted upon grieving loved ones or the community."

Under the bill, an official filling out a death certificate would have to respect evidence that the deceased person had changed gender identity, including health records showing treatment for gender transition, court approval for a name change, an advanced health care directive or other documents.

Last year, the legislature passed other laws protecting transgender rights, including one that allows minors to

participate in school athletics and use restrooms in accordance with their chosen gender.

Reporting by Sharon Bernstein; editing by Sandra Maler

© 2014 Thomson Reuters. All rights reserved.