

Name: National Lawyers Guild, Detroit and Michigan Chapter

Date: 03/06/2023

ADM File Number: 2022-03

Comment:

As an organization dedicated to human and civil rights, the National Lawyers Guild, Detroit and Michigan Chapter, strongly supports the proposed amendment of MCR 1.109 . The amendment would allow parties and attorneys to designate their correct pronouns and require those pronouns to be used appropriately in court records and proceedings.

Equal protection under the law must begin with treating all people with respect in our courts. The Michigan Supreme Court held just last year that transgender people are protected by our state's non-discrimination laws. Courts cannot uphold the rights of transgender and nonbinary people, however, if they do not respect their gender identities in their language.

When nonbinary and transgender people appear in Michigan courts as litigants, attorneys, or criminal defendants, they deserve the same respect and dignity afforded to every other person. This includes the right to be addressed in a way that respects their correct gender.

This proposed rule harms no one. No judge, court employee, litigant, defendant or attorney loses anything by being required to refer to someone else in the way that person states is accurate. Contrary to what some who have opposed this rule have argued, acknowledging and referring to someone properly does not jeopardize any religious right.

On behalf of our Board and the hundreds of lawyers, legal workers, jailhouse lawyers and activists who form our membership, we encourage the adoption of this amendment. It is a necessary step toward ensuring that all individuals receive equal treatment and respect in Michigan courts.

Respectfully submitted,

Naomi Zikmund-Fisher, Secretary

On behalf of the Board of National Lawyers Guild, Detroit and Michigan Chapter