

March 29, 2018

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL: skiwala.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

Sophie Kiwala, MPP
2-303 Bagot Street, The LaSalle Mews
Kingston, Ontario K7K 5W7

Dear Ms. Kiwala,

RE: Bill 26, *Fee Waivers (Photo Card and Birth Certificate) Act, 2018*

On behalf of the HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario (HALCO), please accept this letter of support for Bill 26, *Fee Waivers (Photo Card and Birth Certificate) Act, 2018*. We support this legislation to enhance access to photo cards and birth certificates for individuals who cannot afford to pay associated fees.

HALCO, founded in 1995, is a community legal clinic serving the legal needs of low-income people in Ontario who are living with HIV. It is the only such organization in Canada. The clinic is governed by a board of directors, the majority of whom must be persons living with HIV. In addition to providing direct legal services, HALCO staff engage in public legal education, community development and law reform activities. Among other activities, clinic staff have handled almost 60,000 legal issues, conducted hundreds of public legal education workshops, and intervened at various courts including in 10 matters at the Supreme Court of Canada. For more information about the clinic's work, see our most recent annual report at <https://www.halco.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Annual-Report-HALCO-2016-2017.pdf>.

People with limited incomes and precarious living situations are disproportionately susceptible to losing their government-issued identification or of having identification stolen. Not having the money to replace identification is particularly stressful and challenging. As a result, resource poor service providers and charitable organizations often have to turn to case-by-case creative solutions to assist with required fees.

Without financial support to cover the costs, individuals may have no choice but to live without vital identification, which has serious impacts on many aspects of daily life. Without identification, it is extremely difficult if not impossible to apply for various benefits, access housing, or open/access bank accounts. It has also been reported that perpetrators of domestic/intimate partner violence often withhold their victims' identification papers, which can result in even greater challenges for victims.

Removing fees for individuals who cannot afford to pay will directly help the most vulnerable in Ontario. And there are precedents such as fee waivers for court and administrative tribunal matters and name changes for residential school survivors.

We acknowledge and support your agenda for reform in other areas of law which are designed to improve the lives of Ontarians. We look forward to Bill 26 becoming law to further this agenda.

Sincerely,

HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario

per:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ryan Peck', written in a cursive style.

Ryan Peck

Barrister & Solicitor

Executive Director