

# Disney, Google, Microsoft back trans rights amid fierce British debate

*Trans rights have become a contentious issue in Britain as the government decides whether to ease the rules on legally changing gender.*

By Rachel Savage

Thomson Reuters Foundation (14.09.2020) – <https://tmsnrt.rs/2E0YZpq> – Dozens of organisations including Disney, Google and Microsoft weighed into a fierce debate over transgender rights in Britain on Monday, writing to Prime Minister Boris Johnson to ask him to support making it easier for people to legally change gender.

Trans rights have become a contentious issue since the government launched a consultation into reforming the Gender Recognition Act in 2018, with opponents saying easing the rules could potentially let predatory men into women-only spaces.

Multinational companies were joined by universities and trans advocacy groups in the open letter to Johnson, which drew 83 signatories. Dozens more, including BP and Unilever, pledged support for trans rights in an online statement.

“We wanted to get this public statement out that says no matter what you’re reading from certain sources, that’s not reality,” said Bobbi Pickard, a BP project manager who came out as trans in 2018 and who spearheaded the open letter initiative.

“Being trans is something that’s a naturally occurring form of human development,” she said. “We all want our employees to flourish in their careers and their lives and trans people should be allowed to do that as well.”

Britain’s government has repeatedly delayed its response to the trans law consultation, and in June local media reported that it was set to scrap plans to let trans people change their gender on birth certificates without a medical diagnosis.

A spokesman for the government’s Equalities Office said in an email that officials were working through the results of the consultation and “will be responding shortly”.

Countries including Ireland, Norway and Argentina allow trans people to change their legal gender without a medical diagnosis, known as “self-ID”.

Prominent figures including “Harry Potter” author J.K. Rowling have expressed concern that “self-ID” could allow men into women-only spaces such as toilets and changing rooms, endangering women and girls.

Monday's letter, which was initially sent privately in July with fewer signatories, pledged support for trans staff and urged the government to support the consultation's findings.

"We all strive to be trans-inclusive organisations and believe that a diverse workforce, including trans employees, offers greater business success," it said.

"Failing to honour the government's commitment to implement the consultation findings, and even increasing restrictions on trans people's ability to live authentically, benefits no one," the letter added.

Robbie de Santos of Stonewall UK, an LGBT+ advocacy group that helped coordinate the campaign, said numerous companies had got in touch to say they wanted to show the British government that there was support for trans rights.

"Actually that support is not being heard in the mix of the often very toxic social media environment," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.