

West Japan GID group leader calls for sex on 'My Number' ID card to match gender identity

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An image of a My Number individual identification card. (Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications)

MATSUE -- The leader of a citizens group for gender identity disorder (GID) has called on the Shimane Prefectural Government to change the gender of their "My Number" individual identification card from male to female, in what is believed to be the first request of its kind in Japan.

Chihiro Ueda, who identifies as a woman while being registered as a man on family registry and resident card records, asked the Shimane Prefectural Government to consider changing the "My Number" individual identification card listing to female.

According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Ueda's request is considered to be the first of its kind in Japan. The 63-year-old cited how the card can be used for identity verification, and argued, "It denies my existence, and distresses me mentally. I want the card to match the gender the individual identifies with."

The Act on Special Cases in Handling Gender Status for Persons with Gender Identity Disorder requires sex reassignment surgery when changing a gender on a family registry, but Ueda has not undergone surgery for health reasons.

A representative of the ministry's My Number system support office said, "The My Number card also functions as a health insurance card, and there is meaning in clearly indicating the physical sex (of the individual) to respond to gender-specific illnesses."

Ueda asked the Matsue Municipal Government to change the gender section on the health insurance card to female in 2011. The following year, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare approved the change, writing "see the back side" on the front side of the card and "male under the family registry (due to gender identity disorder)" on the back.

Mikiya Nakatsuka, professor of reproductive medicine at Okayama University's graduate school and chairman of the Japanese Society of Gender Identity Disorder, said, "Many people find it difficult to live because of their gender identified in the family registry based on their body when they were born. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications should take a similar response to that of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare."

(Japanese original by Haruno Kosaka, Matsue Bureau)