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Testimony in Support of SB581

Dear Chairman Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I write in support of SB581.

We changed our son's name a few years ago. It was a very private matter. But the State of Maryland required us to publish the personal information of a 15-year-old child in a newspaper before granting our petition. Suddenly our family decisions were held up for public scrutiny. Nobody has been able to tell me yet why the State mandates this invasion of children's privacy.

For months afterward, the very first result when searching for his name on Google was the legal notice of his name change. It listed not only his changed name but also his birth name. That notice has since been removed, but for the rest of his life, my son will have to worry that anytime anyone searches for his name online, they will immediately be privy to deeply personal information that is nobody else's business. I can imagine this affecting his employment, his personal life, perhaps even his safety.

It's too late to change this for my child. But it's not too late for the members of this Committee to prevent this from happening to any more children in the future. By simply removing the legal requirement that individuals must publish legal notice of a name change, you will be helping children today and for the rest of their lives.

Sincerely,

James R. Smith
Baltimore, MD