

SUPPORT SB 0581

Lee Blinder
Montgomery County
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Thank you to the committee members for your time and attention to this important matter. This bill is important to me, personally as a transgender (trans) person, who has undergone the name change process in Maryland. Trans persons, like me, face many barriers to living as our most authentic selves. One of these barriers includes the financial expense of publishing our name change in the newspaper or at the courthouse. The requirement to publish our name change is also a violation of our privacy. The hardship imposed by name publication can be eased by supporting this bill - as it is written.

I am privileged to be able to be out about my identity as a trans person, as I do not face many of the hardships that my fellow community members face. Despite the aforementioned, the process of publishing my name change was intimidating and an invasion of my privacy. The newspaper that I published in, the Montgomery County Sentinel, has gone out of business as of 1/31/2020. The Montgomery County Sentinel was the cheapest and most private option as they did not have an online distribution. I appreciated the discretion on their part.

For me personally, having the details of my name change (such as my former name and my current name together) put online would have been a violation of my privacy. The name change publication requirement, due to forced disclosure through publication, has the potential to jeopardize my safety and future employment opportunities. As the previously stated option is no longer available to transgender persons who live in my county and my neighboring counties, and because publication is outdated, burdensome financially, and violates the privacy of transgender persons, it would be deeply impactful to pass this bill. Reducing the financial burden that transgender persons face when striving to live our most authentic lives will make a difference in our lives. I spent almost \$600 on my name change alone (cost of documents, travel, fees, etc), and many of my peers face name change costs close to \$1000 to \$3000 depending on their personal situations.

Passing SB 0581 is a simple fix that puts Maryland in line with best practices for name change in states like Kentucky and Mississippi, both of whom do not require publication. This reduces time and effort for the courts to monitor and process publication notices or waivers, which reduces the fiscal note to the taxpayer and streamlines the process internally.

I appreciate your time, and I encourage the committee to vote in Support of SB 0581.

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