
To: Members of The House Judiciary Committee

From: Family & Juvenile Law Section Council (FJLSC)
by Moges Abebe, Esquire

Date: February 12, 2020

Subject: **House Bill 693:**
Paternity Proceedings – Court Orders – Legal Name Change of Child

Position: **SUPPORT**

The Maryland State Bar Association (MSBA) FJLSC **supports House Bill 693 – Paternity Proceedings – Court Orders – Legal Name Change of Child.**

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Family and Juvenile Law Section Council (“FJLSC”) of the Maryland State Bar Association (“MSBA”). The FJLSC is the formal representative of the Family and Juvenile Law Section of the MSBA, which promotes the objectives of the MSBA by improving the administration of justice in the field of family and juvenile law and, at the same time, tries to bring together the members of the MSBA who are concerned with family and juvenile laws and in reforms and improvements in such laws through legislation or otherwise. The FJLSC is charged with the general supervision and control of the affairs of the Section and authorized to act for the Section in any way in which the Section itself could act. The Section has over 1,200 attorney members.

HB693 simply clarifies that in a paternity proceeding the court has the specific authority to rule on the issue of whether or not the child’s name should be changed. Some Judges have changed the name of children in paternity proceedings relying on the “catch all” provision in the current statute Family Law Art. 5-1035(a)(4) which provides that in a paternity proceeding the court may rule on “any other matter that is related to the welfare and best interests of the child.” This bill eliminates any controversy or dispute regarding whether that broad authority to protect the welfare and best interest of the child includes that of changing or declining to change the name of the child. Because the issues of name change and paternity are often entwined, because what a child’s surname should be is sometimes a matter of controversy between parents and because what a child’s surname will often have a long-term impact on the child both psychologically and socially, giving the circuit courts the specific authority to rule on this issue will better enable them to safeguard the child’s best interest in this regard.



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For the reason(s) stated above, the MSBA **supports House Bill 693 and urges a favorable committee report.**

Should you have any questions, please contact Ilene Glickman by e-mail at ilene@lawhj.com or by telephone at (410) 821-8718.