



Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Robert R. Neall, Secretary

January 23, 2020

The Honorable Senator Delores G. Kelley
Chair, Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: SB0102 – Vital Records – Birth Certificates – Change of Name of Child – Letter of Support

Dear Chair Kelley and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (Department) is submitting this letter of support for SB0102 – Vital Records – Birth Certificates – Change of Name of Child.

Current law allows the Department to change the name of an infant within twelve months of birth at the request of both parents, who must present a notarized statement that they are the parents of the infant. However, this poses an undue burden on a single mother who has not listed the name of the father on her child's birth certificate. In these cases, the mother must obtain a court order to change her infant's name, incurring unnecessary costs and substantial delays and inconvenience.

There are many reasons why a woman might choose not to include the name of the father on the birth certificate, including domestic violence situations. A father not married to the mother of the child always has ample opportunity and is encouraged to complete an Affidavit of Parentage at the delivery of the child, or afterwards, which allows their name to be listed as a parent on the birth certificate.

This bill will allow mothers of infants without a father listed on the birth certificate to amend their infant's name within 12 months of birth by completing a request form and signing a notarized affidavit that she is the parent of the child and freely making the request. This will allow her to request this change at the same cost and speed as those with two named parents on a birth certificate. This will dramatically improve customer satisfaction with our services.

This bill will also make processing these requests for name changes more efficient for the Division of Vital Records, allowing them to spend more time on other more complicated birth record amendments. This change in statute would also reduce the number of court orders required, resulting in reduced work for circuit courts around the state.

I hope this information is useful. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact Director of Governmental Affairs Webster Ye at (410) 260-3190 or webster.ye@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert R. Neall", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Robert R. Neall
Secretary