

Hello Ms. Shetty,

Im writing to express my strong support for the bill eliminating the requirement for name changes to be published (HB 427). Please accept this email as my written testimony as I cannot attend the hearing in person. I support this legislation because I see that the current law creates an unnecessary danger for transgender people, and those escaping stalking or domestic violence.

The barriers our society creates for transgender people to live as their true selves are unacceptable. There should not be so much logistical and financial burden to having a name legally recognized. Further, there are people with violent hatred of transgender individuals, solely because they are transgender. Publications of name changes create an unnecessary risk of individuals being targeted by hate. There are people I love who I don't want to be put at risk in this way, and they do not deserve to be put in unnecessary risk simply to overcome bureaucratic hurdles. In addition to the physical risks, publication of the name change can cause anxiety and distress because people are aware of the way in which it could cause them to be targeted with harrassment, discrimination, or violence. Transgender people are not the only ones who may need privacy when changing a name. When I was younger, a person I lived with was stalked. If you have not seen it personally, it is difficult to convey how terrifying it is to have a person obsessively creeping around your home, school, recreational activities etc. all the while making threats and demanding a sexual relationship you have no interest in. If a person is being targeted in this way, and the problem is so severe that they choose a name change, they deserve to be able to do it discretely, without leaving documentation for their abuser to use to find them again.

Thank you,

Deirdre Middleton
Burtonsville, MD
20866

Hello. I am submitting this testimony in support of passing MD HB427.

Had this law been in effect about 4 years ago, my family member would not have had to humiliatingly publish their name change in a newspaper when they transitioned.

Thankfully nothing bad came out of that publication that I know of now but we did have to pay for it and feel subjected to an antiquated practice. Also that record can live on where it could violate my relative's privacy.

Therefore I strongly support HB427 to waive public name announcements for trans individuals.

Also since I am a strong trans advocate and LGBTQ ally, I also support HB488 and HB81. There is no way anyone who commits a crime should be able to use "trans panic" or gay/bi "panic" as a defense! It is ridiculous.

Thank you,

Catherine A Landfried
[7119 Fountain Rock Way](#)

[Columbia MD 21046](#)
H 410-290-7698
Howard Co voter

February 4, 2020

Statement to the Maryland House Judiciary Committee

Re: HB 427 Action for Change of Name - Waiver of Publication Requirement
Support

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

My name is Emma Kupferman, I am a therapist who works with many transgender clients in my clinical practice. I write to you today, as a clinician and as a resident of Baltimore, MD, in support of HB 427. This bill is an important step in ensuring the health, safety and dignity of transgender Marylanders by significantly reducing the burden of those seeking to change their legal name. Under the current law, the publication requirement adds barriers of time and additional costs to the name change process, often weeks or months and up \$200. These unnecessary time and financial burdens impact all who want to change their legal name, but most particularly the most vulnerable of people including low-income Maryland residents and those who most desperately need privacy such as survivors of domestic and family violence.

Changing one's legal name is often part of a transgender person's process of living as their most authentic selves; barriers or delays can cause emotional distress, anxiety and create increased opportunities for transgender people to face discrimination and even violence if they do not have the correct legal name documentation. I want to live in a state that is part of leading the nation in eliminating barriers to transgender people having all they need to live free, healthy and happy lives . For these reasons, I strongly encourage the Committee to support HB 427.

Sincerely,

Emma Kupferman, MSW, LICSW, LCSW-C

HB 427
SUPPORT

Lee Blinder
February 3, 2020

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 of 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 old name and my current name) 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 (that is in 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 HB 427 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 HB 427.

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF HB 427, February 3, 2020

**LISA MARCUS
2003 Chapel Ct
Frederick, MD 21702
301-664-1504**

As the mother of a transgender young adult, I am very much in favor of HB 427. When my son came out as male five years ago, I filed for a legal name change on his behalf because he was a minor (14 years old). We petitioned to waive the publication requirement because he was afraid that any publication of his birth name and new name together would linger on the internet and be searchable by future employers, fellow students, or anyone who might discriminate against him due to his being transgender.

The judge in Frederick County allowed us to post a notice in the Frederick County Courthouse instead of publishing in a local newspaper, which was preferable for his safety and privacy, but this still meant that my son had to keep using his birth name for 60 days while the notice was posted, in addition to the four months it took for the courthouse to process the order. Being called by his female-sounding birth name increased his suicidal thoughts and made it difficult for him to concentrate in school, and at that time our school district had no policy in place to protect transgender students or to allow them to use preferred names. My son was in the hospital multiple times for suicidal ideation during this period, some of which might have been avoided if the publication requirement could have been waived.

A study published by the University of Texas in March 2018 showed that trans youth who are allowed to use their preferred name instead of their birth name have a **34% decrease in thoughts of suicide** and a **65% decrease in suicide attempts**.¹ Streamlining the name change process for trans youth in Maryland will quite literally save lives. My son survived his teenage years, and we had the resources to pay for the legal name change process, so I'm one of the lucky ones. One in three trans youth considers suicide. I have personally known several parents who have lost their trans kids to suicide, and I'm part of a Facebook parents' group in which we hear of youth suicides on a regular basis. My son thinks this is normal; most of his friends have seriously considered or attempted suicide. Anything that decreases this risk for these kids is of the utmost importance.

I understand the reasons behind a publication requirement for avoiding fraud, but I feel very strongly that in the case of transgender persons, this requirement should be automatically waived. It's a matter of personal safety for them, as it was for my son.

Thank you for your support of my kids.

¹ <https://news.utexas.edu/2018/03/30/name-use-matters-for-transgender-youths-mental-health/>

Hello,

My name is Dawn Earp and I'm a resident of Maryland ([14317 Latakia Pl, North Potomac, MD 20878](#)), and I'm writing to urge the House Judiciary committee to pass HB 427 (http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2020rs/bills_noln/hb/fhb0427.pdf) through the hearing and to a vote for the committee and to the general floor.

The removal of the Publication requirement is important for the safety of many people, including adults looking to shed the name of their abusive family or trans people working to rename themselves appropriately. At this time, with the permanence of the internet such a filing for a name change is an invasion of privacy and will stay with the transperson or survivor of abuse forever more. This can allow future discrimination by employers, risks to safety if found out by acquaintances, and other unforeseen issues. Trans people are high risk for assault (sexual and otherwise, with around [47% of Transgender people experiencing sexual assault in their life](#)) and giving people who aren't accepting the ability to 'prove' that the transperson is 'deceiving' them can lead to assault on the transperson.

I have a close friend who has a child who is 8 and was Assigned Male at Birth, but is very much a young girl. I don't want her to have to publish such a change, when she will be able to transition during her puberty and likely live a full life as a woman.

Transpeople are often also lower income, due to extreme depression stemming from their dysphoria. The \$100-200 fee to file a publication is therefore a blocker to many to be able to enact a legal name change. Denying someone the ability to change their name due to fees, which such affirmations can stem suicidal rates is criminal. [Over half of transgender boys and over a quarter of transgender girls attempt suicide](#), and many are successful rather than only attempting. Affirmation (such as correct pronouns and use of a chosen name) can dramatically reduce the suicidal rate.

I urge the committee to quickly put the bill forward without further amendments or changes which could reduce the effectiveness of this bill to protect the privacy of Maryland's vulnerable citizens and increase the survival rate of an at risk population.

Thank you,

Dawn Earp

Dear Rep. Shetty and all others concerned,

I am a professor at a Maryland state school and know many people who have changed their names for all sorts of reasons. But the ones I'm writing for are primarily my transgender students, whose lives are made less safe by the requirement to publish their change of name.

Published name changes create online records that can be found by anyone who thinks to google them. While this may seem like a good idea to prevent fraud, in practice it creates an invasion of privacy for people who live their lives under a chosen name. Some of my students have changed their name to seek safety when leaving domestic violence; a record would allow an abusive spouse to find them. Some of my students have had their lives threatened by friends, relatives, and partners; many, but not all, were trans students.

Even those who don't mind publication now face the additional burden of publication fees. Many trans and emancipated students have little or no family support. They work two jobs to afford college, many are effectively homeless (I have students living on other students' couches), and they have the added burden of seeking name changes on top of that. Those who have left abusers live in fear that restraining orders will be violated, and on limited funds. Many have children. I have seen, first hand, how vulnerable these students are to small costs adding up and ending their pursuit of a college degree.

The process of legally changing a name (with or without updating one's gender) allows people to live safer, more productive lives. This leads to a safer Maryland. Maryland citizens who are living with their most authentic, honest face forward are harmed by having to pay to have their privacy protected. A vote for HB 427 will make our most vulnerable citizens safer. They shouldn't have to pay money to be safe from abuse and discrimination. It's not worth it.

Sincerely,

Dr. Molly Jones-Lewis, Lecturer, UMBC

Dr. Molly Jones-Lewis (she/ her)

Ancient Studies Department

University of Maryland, Baltimore County

1000 Hilltop Circle

Baltimore, MD, 21250

Hello,

My name is Lindsay Hammond, and I am a citizen of Baltimore City. I am in support of HB 427 and believe in the right of trans people to own their truth and take personal decisions of who they were pre-transition into their own hands.

This bill will effectively require courts to waive publication requirements for those who are most affected by name change processes. This information can be accessed by anyone and will be available on the Internet for anyone to see at a later time. This is a violation of privacy against trans people and it is not okay. We live in a society where trans people are killed at an alarming rate, particularly trans people who do not have access to name change processes, like the ones currently in existence because of the publication requirement, and do not subscribe to normative presentations of gender.

Information can always be leaked, and requiring those who wish to express their true identities to publish them for everyone to see is a direct violation of privacy and will lead to more trans people being discriminated against or killed for being who they are. This archaic practice cannot continue if we want to be supportive of those different from us, those who are oppressed for their identities. Give trans people an option to live their truths without public interference.

Thank you,
Lindsay

05/February/2020

JR Johnstone 514 S. Ann St. APT 2 Baltimore City, MD 21231

RE: HB 427, Action for Change of Name - Waiver of Publication Requirement

Dear Delegate Shetty,

I'm testifying in support of HB 427, Action for Change of Name - Waiver of Publication Requirement. As a non-binary transgender individual currently undergoing a legal name change, I have direct experience as to how HB 427 would have affected me and will affect other non-binary and transgender Maryland residents.

Requiring courts to waive the publication requirement would remove a financial barrier for individuals seeking a name change. In addition to the Baltimore City \$165 court filing fee, I've had to pay a \$80 publication fee. I am lucky to be working full-time and can financially cover close to \$250 in fees, but not every individual, especially in Baltimore City, has the economic freedom that I enjoy. This total does not factor in the lost wages I have experienced when I had to take time away from work to file my paperwork and file with the newspaper publication. I will incur additional fees in-order to update other various identification documents such as my US Passport.

In addition to removing a financially burdensome fee, removing one additional step in the name change process will benefit everyone. I am currently on month 4 of a pending name change, 1 month of this attributed to the need to post the publication requirement. Along with updating my State and Federal documents, I estimate I will have to notify over 15 separate private companies that I interact with on a monthly basis in order to finalize my name change. Removing one unnecessary step will make this process faster and removes one step for Maryland residents.

I hope my testimony in support of HB 427, Action for Change of Name - Waiver of Publication Requirement, will compel the Maryland legislation to advance HB 427.

Thank you, JR Johnstone

CC: Del. Luke Clippinger Del. Brooke E. Lierman

HB427 SUPPORT

Lily Amara Pastor February 3, 2020

Between legal, medical, and social transition elements, trans people face a long series of hurdles to achieving affirming transition results. For many of us, the first two years of our transition feel like an endless, winding path, filled with unintentionally cruel service providers and confusing directions, and costing thousands. In that context, every hurdle we remove is significant.

I've been in the process of changing my name and updating corresponding documents for over a year. Logistical and administrative complications have combined with mental health issues, meaning that I still don't have a driver's license with my correct name or gender on it or an accurate picture. I've spent on the order of \$300 and waited hours in courthouses and offices. I've spoken to very kind court clerks and stood politely while they struggled to figure out how to respectfully refer to me, a common situation faced by trans people early in transition. I'm an abuse and sexual assault survivor suffering from PTSD, and as this process has dragged on, it's started to feel a little like Sisyphus pushing the boulder.

Incorrect IDs and timelines over a year to correct them are not uncommon for trans people. The 2015 US Trans Survey found only 11% of respondents had successfully updated all their IDs and a staggering 68% had updated none. 25% had experienced verbal harassment as a result of using a mismatched ID; 16% were denied services and 2% were assaulted.

As that and other studies of transgender Americans show, we are more likely to be financially unstable, more likely to experience homelessness, to suffer from mental illness, and to have suffered severe trauma, like sexual or intimate partner violence. These factors illuminate why trans people will be disproportionately affected by the financial and administrative burdens that this bill would remove.

I ask that you please return a favorable report on HB427 and help ease the suffering of trans Marylanders as we walk the confusing, winding, and often expensive road of transition.

Attn: emily.shetty@house.state.md.us

Re: HB-427

Statement of Support

As the parent of a transgender child, I strongly support House Bill 427.

My daughter is only eight years old. She has been out to me as a girl since she was four, and has been out at her school as a girl for the last half year. It has been very hard for her at school, where bullying is constant despite prior assurances of help from the administration.

We are currently working on the process to legally change my daughter's name. Imagine the horror of a parent to learn that not only is the process more complicated than expected, but that once the name change is assured, we have to beg a court to grant a waiver so that my eight-year-old child is not exposed to *public outing in a newspaper*.

Given the widespread harassment of trans people, this requirement to make a name change public amounts to nothing less than marking us with bullseye targets for hate groups.

I beg the committee to consider supporting this bill.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Rose Phin
1933 Altavue Road
Baltimore, MD 21228

District 7 Voter

Ezra MacLeod Towne

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In Support of HB0427 Action for Change of Name - Waiver of Publication Requirement

February 4, 2020

Chair Delegate Luke Clippenger, Vice-Chair Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, and other esteemed members of the House Judiciary Committee:

My name is Ezra Towne, and I submit this written testimony in support of HB0427 - Action for Change of Name - Waiver of Publication Requirement. I am an activist for trans communities in and around Montgomery County, a resident of Silver Spring for nearly 15 years, and a parent of two kids that attend Montgomery County Public Schools.

My spouse and I welcomed our first child in 2008. I soon found myself writing the name my parents gave me on more documents, more frequently than ever before. Even though I had been using "Ezra" in all social, professional, and familial contexts for several years at that point – the exhaustion of having to mark every enrollment and permission form for pre-school, school, and activities with a second name hadn't fully set in. When my family welcomed a new child in 2012, the number of forms doubled and I couldn't handle it for much longer.

In 2015, I legally changed my name to Ezra MacLeod Towne. The name more accurately reflects the gender I know myself to be. This legal name change also removed much of the stress in child care and schooling logistics, writing checks, getting bills, retaining medical records, opening new accounts and other day to day parts of my life. When I went to the circuit court with all of the forms and documents required to pursue a name change, I paid the required fees and scheduled publication.

My financial and residential status is very stable - and I am incredibly lucky. But this is not the case for many trans people, nor for survivors of domestic abuse, sexual assault, stalking, and harassment. Requiring the publication of name changes causes unnecessary risks to the privacy, safety, and security of all Marylanders seeking a name change. It presumes that individuals can wait an additional few weeks before completion of the order, and that they can afford the additional fee for publication. Costs for publication of name changes vary widely across the state from \$50 to \$250.

HB0427 allows for a safer and more just name change process for Marylanders. The bill would: require all motions to waive publication requirements be granted for change of name, reduce the potential for hostile or discriminatory responses directed at individuals pursuing a change of name, and protect the privacy of all Marylanders as they go through the name change process. Fifteen other states have already eliminated publication requirements for name changes.

I urge you to support HB0427. Ensuring privacy during the name change process can and will save lives.

Sincerely,



Ezra MacLeod Towne

Dear Delegate Shetty,

I would like to provide testimony for the hearing on HB427. I am transgender and currently changing my name from my birth name to my chosen name in Prince George's County.

There are a few challenging aspects of the name change process in MD:

1. The extensive paperwork and need to travel at least twice in person to the courthouse.
2. The high cost. This is more challenging for some than others depending on their financial means.
3. The emotional burden of the long wait times. Every time I have to show my driver's license, credit card, and other items bearing my current legal name I feel like I am being outed and this is distressing. When people use these documents to identify me verbally, they often call out my old name and I feel embarrassed and that my safety is threatened because strangers may hear.
4. The public outing of me due to publication of my name change. I worry that this could make me a target living in a county where multiple people like me have been murdered, in the case that a bad actor used this information to identify and persecute me.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Best,
Naomi

--

Naomi Patton
She/Her/Hers
Greenbelt, MD
615-424-9940

I am writing to show my support for HB 427: Action for Change of Name – Waiver of Publication Requirement.

As a parent of a young child who has required a legal name change I can personally attest to how cumbersome and antiquated this process was.

The reason for his name change is personal and private to the family, we put off going through the legal process for months because of this publication requirement. Ultimately, we recognized that it needed to be done before he entered kindergarten for safety reasons. However, the very safety reasons that we were hoping to obtain, are quickly taken away by having to either publish this name change in a newspaper (which comes with a digital record) or posting it at the Sherriff's Office.

We were able to obtain a waiver of publication from a Frederick County Judge, and for the next 30 days his old name and new name hung on a bulletin board just inside the entryway to the courthouse. As a family we hated the idea of complete strangers being able to see our personal family business, but we knew it would have been worse to have a permanent searchable record of it online.

I think the most frustrating part of the process is that both my Husband and I were working together to obtain this name change on behalf of our child. The time it took to wait for approval of the waiver, the amount of money it cost us to do so, and the increasing number of people that we had to deal with to accomplish this all felt like a very personal violation of our family.

I would encourage you to pass this Bill, so that other individuals and families don't have to go through this very difficult and unnecessary process.

Sincerely,

Corrine Wilson

Frederick County

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Bowie, MD 20720
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February 3, 2020

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 427

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the House Judiciary Committee:

My name is Eran Sargent and I am a trans advocate and woman of trans experience. I am a current resident of Bowie, Maryland.

I write to you today to express my support for HB 427. I am affected by the current law as I filed for my name change in December 2019 and was informed almost two months later that my waiver of publication requirement was denied. This happened even though I have received and cited specific threats to my life based on my transgender status in the motion. Requiring publication could lead to further harm and discrimination when my private information is made available.

This bill (HB427) will make it easier for people like me to get necessary basic documentation while also preventing unnecessary instances of violence and discrimination. If my waiver of publication continues to be denied, I am at risk for being exposed and could face harmful effects up to and including bodily harm or death.

As a Social Worker and Therapist, I work with many clients who are affected by this law, in addition to myself. Passage of HB 427 will make a positive impact on the lives of community members who are Marylanders and also happen to be trans.

Thank you,

Eran Sargent

Skylar Hoffman
13902 Marianna Drive, Rockville, MD 20853
Email: skjhoffman@gmail.com
Phone: 240-715-7438 (please leave a message or text)

In Support of HB 427

February 4, 2020

Hello esteemed House Judiciary Committee members,

I would like to voice my support of proposed bill HB 427 to waive publication requirements for people seeking legal name change. I completed my name change last year, but it took much longer than expected in part due to the need to publish notice of the change. I filled out the form in Montgomery County to have my notification displayed in the courthouse rather than a newspaper—a valuable alternative that I was very grateful to have—but I did not realize when I turned in my paperwork that there was an additional fee to have that notice posted which was not covered by the money I had already paid. Due to this, my name change was significantly delayed as the county office sent me a notification by mail of the remaining charge, and I sent back a check, before the notice was actually posted for the required timeframe. The entire legal process actually took about six months in my case (an unusually long timeframe from what I hear), by which time I was preparing for my first semester of grad school, and did not have time to go to the Social Security Office and the DMV to update my remaining documents.

It is stressful to have one's legal name in limbo; while we seldom consider the legal minutia of our names in daily life, in the middle of the proceedings, I worried about potential mis-matches between my documents and plane tickets as I traveled with my family, and, as the process dragged on, the possibility of having to submit my taxes with two legal names in use. While I understand the intended original purpose of posting notice to be as a courtesy to the agencies or persons that might need to know about someone's name change, at present the notices are often published in places that would never be seen by the hypothetical relevant parties. Further, the person changing their name will then go around to all those pertinent agencies of their own accord to notify them of the change in order to have accounts and billing statements updated. It is my understanding that there are already other measures in place to keep this policy from being abused by persons who might be changing their name to avoid past misdeeds, and as such I hope you will consider eliminating this needlessly time-consuming and tedious requirement from the name-change process. While for me this requirement was simply an annoyance, for people fleeing abuse, the need to publish their name change can undermine their flight and put them at risk again.

Thank you for considering this important issue. It is an honor to be able to help inform the local legal process, and I am very grateful to you for the job you are doing.

Sincerely,
Skylar Hoffman

