

Bill: HB0427
Title: Action for Change of Name - Waiver of Publication Requirement
Date: February 5, 2019
Committee: House Judiciary Committee
Position: Support

My name is Sarah Cuneo and I live in Montgomery County with my husband and 14 year old twins. Several years ago, just before their 10th birthday, one of our twins told us that they were transgender (child is nonbinary and uses singular they/them pronouns.) This came as a complete shock to us and we had a lot to process and learn. At the time we knew nothing about transgender youth and we were in uncharted territory. What we did know, however, was that our child had been in distress for years and we never knew why. This revelation was the missing puzzle piece to our child's happiness.

We sought counseling from gender therapists and medical professionals and with their guidance we helped our child through a social transition. This means we changed clothing, hair style, pronouns and name. Making these changes proved to be very healing and affirming for our child and seeing these life-saving changes helped us to take the next step in our child's social transition - a legal name change. This was by far the most stressful step in the process. We petitioned the court, paid the required publication fee and nervously waited to see if the general public would object or have comments. We were also anxious because this publication requirement "outed" our kid to potentially thousands of strangers who frankly, had no business knowing about their gender history.

Not only did we have to list our child's birth name, but also the proposed new name and why we were changing it. My husband and I, like all parents, make important decisions every day on how to best support and raise our children. Whether it be medical interventions, academic pathways or spiritual growth, these decisions are left to individual families to make in the privacy of their own homes. We, as parents, know what is best for our children. Why should we have to publicize that our child's name is being changed and why it is changing? By having to publicize this information, it put our child at risk and their privacy was violated. We still wonder if this publication will surface to be used to taunt, harass or discriminate against our child. They just want to be a regular kid who flies under the radar without having to worry about people not in their inner circle questioning their name or identity. Why should people be "outed" and held to scrutiny from the general public because of who they are? We see no benefit to requiring publication or divulging private information to the public and only see how it harms transgender and nonbinary people.

We hope that all Maryland children will be afforded privacy and security as they solidify their identities and seek to live as their beautiful, authentic selves. We look forward to a favorable report. Respectfully, Sarah Cuneo, A Mom in Transition