

Cass Caveney
Silver Spring, Maryland

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HB 427 – Action for Change of Name – Waiver of Publication

SUPPORT

To the Chair, Vice Chair, and esteemed members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am a longtime Maryland resident and went through the name change process here in 2017. Although I was able to successfully navigate the process over several months (the court did not accurately provide all of my information to the newspaper, resulting in a delay), the process imposes more numerous barriers, costs, and dangers to others in my community. While my name change took more time, effort, expense, and loss of privacy than ever should have been necessary, the barriers to more vulnerable members of my community are far higher and the threat of outing, discrimination, violence, and other harms is far more dire and severe.

Respecting the privacy and safety of all Marylanders who need to legally change their names is important no matter their circumstances, but it's critical for transgender and nonbinary Marylanders as we face increased risk of harassment, violence, and discrimination due to our gender identities. Unfortunately, there is an uneven response to motions for waivers of the publication requirement in Maryland. Some are granted without too much trouble, but all too often I hear from people in my community whose waivers have been rejected or who had to spend a great deal of time, effort, and expense to finally persuade a court to grant the waiver.

All of this to avoid a completely unnecessary notice in a newspaper where no one who needs to know will see it anyway. Credit agencies and creditors have no trouble finding our new name (if only it were so easy to update all our records!) as they keep track via Date of Birth and Social Security Number (and we are already required to update the Social Security Administration with our new name before we may apply for a Maryland ID or driver's license under our new name). They certainly are not relying on, looking at, or even aware of what's printed in small newspapers in Maryland. They certainly have no trouble in neighboring Virginia, the District of Columbia, and the fifteen other states

that do not require publication of name changes. The year is 2020 and it's time for Maryland to move on from this outdated and antiquated publication requirement.

This is a simple bill. This will cost the State of Maryland nothing. The only change will be to require all motions for waiver of the publication requirement to be granted. If anything, this will only serve to reduce the burden on our courts. All existing notification laws will remain unchanged.

People in our communities deserve the liberty to decide when and to whom they wish to disclose their name change and should be free to live their lives without fear. Please support the safety, dignity, and privacy of all Marylanders.

I respectfully urge this committee to issue a **favorable report for House Bill 427**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Cass Caveney

Trans Recognition Maryland