



The Senate of Maryland
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB 581 – ACTION FOR CHANGE OF NAME - WAIVER OF PUBLICATION
REQUIREMENT

Senate Bill 581 removes the antiquated publishing requirement for legal name changes. This is a holdover from the days when creditors wanted to ensure that debtors didn't abscond from their responsibilities. In today's world, financial systems trace debts through social security numbers- rendering the publishing of name changes to be meaningless and burdensome at best- discriminatory and dangerous at worst.

This bill will help simplify and update the name change procedures by removing only the publication requirements for those who wish to do so. It does not change anything else about the name change process and it is important to note what this bill does NOT do:

- It does not alter or change any other requirements such as crime victim notification or any existing process to apply for a name change
- It does not re-litigate who can or petition for a name change
- All the rules still apply - it simply allows an individual who has already filed a motion to change their name to waive any publication requirements

Maryland would not be among the first to streamline the process and administrative burden associated with changing one's name. Currently, nineteen states and jurisdictions have waived publication requirement.

Publication is a costly requirement that disproportionate impacts individuals with low incomes, individuals living in urban areas, and individuals who are transgender. The cost of publication varies dramatically from county-to-county and newspaper-to-newspaper, from \$40 up to \$250.

There are many individuals who would be positively impacted by the removal of this requirement. Victims of domestic abuse sometimes file for a name change to separate themselves from abusers. Today, under MD Rule 15-901, they are required to public their name change in a publication of general circulation in their county of residence. Under SB 581, removing the publication requirement would assist survivors who are seeking separation and safety from their abusers.

Additionally, members of the LGBTQ + community who are seeking to be identified by their preferred name face challenges for simply wanting to protect themselves from public notification of a name with which they no longer identify. Not only can anyone,

including potential and current employers, access and view a name history- but these records live on the internet in perpetuity. Such public notices potentially make transgendered persons vulnerable to discrimination, intimidation or even violence.

Removing the name change publishing requirement will help keep safe transgender and non-binary people and survivors of domestic violence, who wish to avoid risk and stigma, giving them the dignity and privacy, they deserve. For these reasons, I ask for a favorable report of SB 581.