

State of Maryland

Commission on Civil Rights

“Our vision is to have a State that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination.”



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February 26, 2021

Senate Bill 581 – Action for Change of Name - Waiver of Publication Requirement **POSITION: Support**

Dear Chairperson Smith, Vice Chairperson Waldstreicher, and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (“MCCR”; “The Commission”) is the State agency responsible for the enforcement of laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state contracts based upon race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, physical and mental disability, and source of income.

Senate Bill 581 requires a court, on motion by an individual who has filed an action for change of name under Maryland Rule 15-901, to waive the publication requirement set forth in the Rule. The current fees to petition the court for a name change are \$165 plus the cost of publishing in a newspaper of general circulation in the county where you live. In Anne Arundel County, for example, the publication cost is \$80 and must be in the Capital Gazette.

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights supports SB581 because this bill reduces procedural and fiscal barriers for individuals whose marital status has changed as well as those who are seeking to change their legal name to a chosen name that more closely matches their gender identity. These changes will make great strides in preventing unintentional disclosure of transgender identity or sex assigned at birth in situations requiring personal identification such as seeking employment, housing, or service at public places requiring age or gender verification for entry or access. Both marital status and gender identity are protected classes under MCCR’s statute. As such, our agency supports the additional protections this law would provide.

For these reasons, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights urges a favorable report on SB581. Thank you for your time and consideration of the information contained in this letter. The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights looks forward to the continued opportunity to work with you to improve and promote civil rights in Maryland.