



**Testimony for the House Judiciary Committee
January 15, 2021**

**HB 39 – Action for Change of Name – Waiver of Publication
Requirement**

FAVORABLE

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The ACLU of Maryland supports HB 39, which would require courts, upon motion, to waive the publication requirement for individuals seeking to change their name.

While individuals change their names for many reasons, this issue is particularly important for LGBTQIA+ individuals seeking a name change on their identity documents that better reflects their sexual orientation and identity.

Under Maryland law, an applicant for a name change must petition the court, and publish notice of their petition to the court in a county newspaper at least fifteen days before the end of the objection period.¹ This requirement may be cost-prohibitive, particularly for low-income individuals, to copy documentation, and pay court fees and the newspaper cost. More importantly, this requirement also puts transgender and non-binary individuals at further risk of discrimination in housing, employment, and education.

The ACLU-MD believes strongly in the values of freedom, autonomy, and self-determination, particularly for communities that have historically faced persecution. Although our society has recently made landmark strides toward LGBTQIA+ equality, there is still a long way to go. HB 39 would take another important step to protect the privacy and safety of LGBTQIA+ individuals, and help ensure they are able to live their lives freely.

For the foregoing reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB 39.

¹ MD Code Ann., Maryland Rules § 15-901(e).