



BILL NO: House Bill 39
TITLE: Action for Change of Name – Waiver of Publication Requirement
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
HEARING DATE: January 15, 2020
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) is the state domestic violence coalition that brings together victim service providers, allied professionals, and concerned individuals for the common purpose of reducing intimate partner and family violence and its harmful effects on our citizens. **MNADV urges the House Judiciary Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 39.**

To a survivor of intimate partner violence, a name change could be a critical step in securing their safety and truly escaping the abuse or violence they experienced. House Bill 39 provides an important and singular modification to current law regarding how a person legally changes their name when it is not in connection with an adoption or divorce. This bill removes the current publication requirement for a name change.

Under current Maryland law, pursuant to Md. Rule 15-901, persons who petition for a name change must publish in a newspaper of general circulation in their county of residence their current name, their intended new name, and the deadline for objections at least fifteen prior to the objection deadline. This publication requirement could allow an abuser to locate a survivor especially since it must be filed in the county in which survivor resides. A survivor of domestic violence might seek a name change to ensure their safety with anonymity, and this publication requirement undermines that very objective. Survivors of domestic violence can obtain new social security numbers without publication and keep their address confidential through the Maryland Safe at Home Address Confidentiality Program both without any publication.

A person seeking a name change will still need to comply with all of the other requirements of Md. Rule 15-901 including providing in the petition for name change whether that person has ever been known by any other names and provide those names, the reasons why they are seeking a name change, a certification that the name change is not for illegal or fraudulent purposes, if the person is a minor seeking a name change the names and addresses of that minor's parents and any guardian or custodian, and whether the person whose is seeking the name change has ever been registered as a sexual offender and the name under which that person registered.¹ A

¹ Md. Rule 15-901(c)(1).



court may hold a hearing on the petition and shall hold a hearing if one is requested by the petitioner.²

The elimination of the publication requirement in Md. Rule 15-901 would have a positive and profound impact for survivor of domestic violence attempting to secure their safety.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence urges a favorable report on HB 39.**

² Md. Rule 15-901(g)