

TRANS MARYLAND



SUPPORT HB 0039

Action for Change of Name - Waiver of Publication Requirement

Trans Maryland
January 13, 2021

Esteemed Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and the Judiciary Committee. My name is Lee Blinder, I use they/them pronouns, and I am the executive director of Trans Maryland. I am writing on behalf of our organization as a proud nonbinary trans Marylander. This bill is very important to Trans Maryland as we serve over 220 transgender (trans) persons per year who seek or have undergone Maryland's legal name change process, and are the only organization in the state to serve trans Marylanders with their name change process from beginning to end (as defined by the individual). This bill provides trans Marylanders with the opportunity to seek a waiver of the state's name change publication requirement.

Maryland's current legal name change process poses financial barriers and safety risks for trans people. Trans people face many barriers to living as our most authentic selves. One of these barriers includes the financial expense of publishing our name change in the newspaper or at the courthouse. The requirement to publish our name change is also a violation of our privacy at a time that should be a celebration for those of us taking these exciting steps to live authentically. The hardship imposed by name publication can be eased by supporting this bill - as it is written.

The name change publication requirement, due to forced disclosure through publication, has the potential to jeopardize safety and future employment opportunities for our community members. As some more discrete publication options in Montgomery County and Prince George's County are no longer available, supporting HB 0039 is more urgent than in years past. Because publication is outdated, burdensome financially, and violates the privacy of transgender persons, it would be deeply impactful to pass this bill. Reducing the financial burden that transgender persons face when striving to live our most authentic lives will make a difference in our lives. Many of our community members face name change total costs close to \$1000 to \$3000 depending on their personal situations, lessening those costs by eliminating publication is the right thing to do.

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Passing HB 0039 is a simple fix that puts Maryland in line with modernized best practices for name change in states like Kentucky and Mississippi, both of whom do not require publication. In all, there are 17 states, plus Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico that do not require publication for a legal name change. This reduces time and effort for the courts to monitor and process publication notices or waivers, which reduces the fiscal note to the taxpayer and streamlines the process internally.

We appreciate your time, and we encourage the committee to provide a favorable report for HB 0039.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Lee Blinder'.

Lee Blinder
Executive Director
Trans Maryland
Lee@transmaryland.org