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LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

Bill: HB 0039 Action for Change of Name - Waiver of Publication Requirement

Organization: PFLAG Salisbury Inc., PO Box 5107, Salisbury Maryland 21802

Submitted by: Michèle Schlehofer, Legislative Chair

Position: **FAVORABLE**

SALISBURY PFLAG SUPPORTS ACTION FOR NAME CHANGE – WAIVER OF PUBLICATION REQUIREMENT

I am submitting this testimony in FAVOR of HB 0039 on behalf of PFLAG Salisbury, the Salisbury, Maryland Chapter of PFLAG National.

HB 0039 would allow, upon request, someone to waive the publication requirement when undergoing a legal name change.

Many transgender people seek name changes as part of the process of their gender transition. Research finds that changing one's name is not only an affirming act, but can also serve to mitigate social determinants of health by improving people's access to medical care and reducing people's exposure to the stress of being misgendered, which combined result in improved mental health. In short, legal name changes improve the well-being of transgender people. The State of Maryland should be facilitating access to this process.

The process of publishing advance notification of a pending name change can, for some transgender people, create an additional deterrent or burden to the name change process. Publication of impending name changes creates privacy and safety risks for transgender people. Transgender people experience disproportionate amounts of harassment and are at higher risk of assault than cisgender people (people who are not transgender). Providing an option of waiving the publication requirement would serve to protect people's privacy during the legal name change process, thus making legal name changes safer and more accessible for transgender people.

PFLAG Salisbury supports HB 0039 and recommends a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.