

COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
PROBATE - JUVENILE DIVISION
Mercer County, Ohio

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Matthew L. Gilmore
Judge
Richard M. Delzeith
Magistrate

May 16, 2024

Re: Opposition Testimony on House Bill 467 before the House Government Oversight Committee

Mercer County Ohio Juvenile/Probate Court

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humpfrey, and esteemed members of the House Government Oversight Committee, thank you for allowing me to present opponent testimony on House Bill 467. In reading through the sponsor testimony and the Ohio Legislative Service Commission Analysis, it appears that the proponents of this bill deem a legal name change to be some magical event. Specifically, representative Piccolantonio states, "the process for a legal name change in Ohio requires an individual to go through a court process that involves a public hearing, disclosure of criminal history, publication in the newspaper in general circulation, and in adjudication by the court or, among by other requirements."

However, the process is actually quite simple. You submit a filing fee along with the application to change name, and a certified copy of your birth certificate, an affidavit in support, and publish notice at least 30 days prior to the hearing and submit proof of publication.

At the hearing, the court will review the application, make sure notice was published and that the other requirements for a name change are met; namely, the applicant has been a resident of the county for 60 days immediately prior to the filing of the application, the application is not made for the purpose of evading any creditors or other obligations, the applicant does not have any current pending bankruptcy proceeding, the applicant has not been convicted of, pled guilty to or been adjudicated a delinquent child for identity fraud and the applicant does not have a duty to comply with Revised Code Section 2950.04 or 2950.041, after having been convicted of, pled guilty to, or adjudicated a delinquent child for having committed a sexually oriented offence or a child victim offence. These items are all in the affidavit and during the hearing the court will have the applicant sworn in and they will testify to these items under penalty of prudence. Unfortunately, that is as far as it goes.

The purpose of House Bill 467 appears to be that the voters need not know if someone has changed his or her name in the past 5 years, as long as it has been done through a court. As demonstrated above, however, the limited inquiry by a court is not much of a protective measure. There is no vetting process. As public officials, we should all be striving for transparency, integrity, and promoting public trust. This can only be done if the individuals running for office are known.

Chairman Peterson and members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity for letting me share my testimony with you. Please don't hesitate if you have any questions

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Matthew L. Gilmore', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Matthew L. Gilmore, Judge
Mercer County Juvenile Court