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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 437 Session of 2025

INTRODUCED BY L. WILLIAMS, CAPPELLETTI, KEARNEY, MUTH, SAVAL, STREET, FONTANA, HAYWOOD AND COLLETT, MARCH 17, 2025

REFERRED TO JUDICIARY, MARCH 17, 2025

AN ACT

Amending the act of October 27, 1955 (P.L.744, No.222), entitled "An act prohibiting certain practices of discrimination because of race, color, religious creed, ancestry, age or national origin by employers, employment agencies, labor organizations and others as herein defined; creating the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission in the Governor's Office; defining its functions, powers and duties; providing for procedure and enforcement; providing for formulation of an educational program to prevent prejudice; providing for judicial review and enforcement and imposing penalties," providing for duties of commission relating to name changes by certain individuals.

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

Section 1. The act of October 27, 1955 (P.L.744, No.222), known as the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act, is amended by adding a section to read:

Section 7.1. Duties of Commission Relating To Name Changes By Certain Individuals.--(a) Not later than sixty days after the effective date of this section, the commission shall establish a single online access point on the commission's publicly accessible Internet website to aid individuals in identifying, securing and understanding the necessary petitions

and procedures associated with satisfying the legal requirements necessary to lawfully assume a change of name in this Commonwealth.

(b) The commission's online access point established under subsection (a) shall provide electronic access to features or resources regarding the following:

(1) How to draft and file a petition for a change of name in the court of common pleas as required under 54 Pa.C.S. § 701 (relating to court approval required for change of name).

(2) A list and explanation of the legal requirements and consequences for a change of name as specified in 54 Pa.C.S. Ch. 7 (relating to judicial change of name), including:

(i) An outline of the procedure from the point of filing a name change petition to the point at which a determination is made by the court.

(ii) A notification of the court's publication requirements relating to the individual's name change petition.

(iii) A notification that the court is required to share one's application for a name change and fingerprints with the Pennsylvania State Police, and how the Pennsylvania State Police handles that information.

(iv) Exceptions to the typical procedure for a name change petition.

(3) The points of contact for, and electronic links to, informational resources, including informational packets relating to name changes, where available, of each court of common pleas to assist an individual seeking a name change in directly contacting the court of common pleas in the county of the individual's residence.

(4) At least one point of contact who:

(i) has specialized expertise assisting individuals who confront biases or inequities rooted in gender or sex stereotypes when navigating the courts or legal name change procedure; and

(ii) is available to provide guidance to individuals regarding the particular challenges individuals may encounter in navigating the name change procedure and, if available, connect individuals with resources in their counties of residence. For purposes of satisfying this requirement, the commission shall seek cooperation from other organizations with specialized expertise in assisting individuals who confront biases or inequities rooted in gender or sex stereotypes, including the Interbranch Commission on Gender, Racial and Ethnic Fairness for recommendations on an appropriate point of contact and providing culturally responsive assistance.

(5) Other features or resources that the commission deems advisable to aid individuals in navigating the process of a change of name.

(c) At the request of the commission, an agency shall cooperate in good faith with, and provide technical assistance and guidance for, the development and implementation of additional features or resources of the commission's online access point established under subsection (a).

(d) The commission shall develop and make available training seminars and informational resources for judges, attorneys and court personnel on the particular challenges that individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, asexual and other sexual minorities encounter in navigating the courts and the legal name change process in order to enable the judges, attorneys and court personnel to become

knowledgeable, competent and affirming throughout the legal name change process. For purposes of satisfying this requirement, the commission may work with other organizations with specialized expertise in assisting individuals who confront bias or inequities rooted in gender or sex stereotypes when navigating the legal name change procedure, including the Interbranch Commission on Gender, Racial and Ethnic Fairness.

(e) As used in this section, the term "agency" includes an office, department, authority, board or commission of the executive branch of the Commonwealth that is subject to the policy, supervision and control of the Governor.

Section 2. This act shall take effect immediately.