

House Judiciary Committee

HB 2474 Support

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Good afternoon and thank you for hearing testimony on HB 2474. I support this bill due to my own experience in getting my name changed and my identification documents after my divorce. While pandemic related office closure surely made this more difficult and time consuming, for example the Social Security office is still not accepting documents in person and only doing phone appointments, every step was a struggle, but then I hit a snag.

The way the judge had written my name change in the divorce decree was acceptable for my local DMV, my local county tax office (car title), and accepted by the Federal offices for my Passport, and student loans (my only creditor), but I hit a snag at the social security office. For one, you have to mail your new passport and new drivers license and original court documents to the Social Security office, and wait for them to be mailed back to you, leaving you without any identification and no drivers license. They called upon receiving my manilla envelope and informed me that the judge had written "May return to the name of Melinda Lavon" in the divorce decree, and while they see that I'm using a legal middle name as a last name now, they cannot accept that language. Had it said "May now use the name of" they would have accepted it. So I had to write a name change order, pay \$200, and request yet another court date. I did not seek legal council due to cost so I wrote the order and thought here we go!

Our divorce took 14 court dates over a year period as he asked for many changes and continuances. So to go to court a 15th time over all of this I think is a huge waste of time for my local very busy court docket. Also when you're a single mother of 4 and self employed, in a pandemic, \$200 is a lot of money - about a week's worth of groceries, or 2 water bills, or the same fee for an entire season of sports. I now have this name change order than allowed me to change my social security number and my NPI National Provider Identification number that healthcare providers must have. This name change issue took an additional year to sort out - so that's over a year where my taxes and work name doesn't match everything else. It's caused confusion when ordering sonograms for other offices and what not.

The funny thing about name change orders - it says I may now apply for a birth certificate with my new name and I suppose I might so that I don't have to bring my marriage license and divorce decree every time I need to verify my identify and justify all the names people have given me over the years. But that also seems like more work for the state of Kansas. I think if my divorce decree would have state my new name with clarity and in a way that all federal and state offices would accept the wording, it would stop wasting the resources

of our courts and most importantly of everyday Kansans who are just trying their best to do the paperwork we need in our everyday lives. Thank you for considering HB 2474. I'm available for questions.