

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 526 Session of 2023

INTRODUCED BY L. WILLIAMS, CAPPELLETTI, KEARNEY, MUTH, HAYWOOD, SAVAL, STREET, FONTANA, KANE AND SANTARSIERO, MARCH 15, 2023

REFERRED TO JUDICIARY, MARCH 15, 2023

AN ACT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 (2) A list and explanation of the legal requirements and  
11 consequences for a change of name as specified in 54 Pa.C.S. Ch.  
12 7 (relating to judicial change of name), including:

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

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

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

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

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

30 (4) At least one point of contact who:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

12 Section 2. This act shall take effect immediately.