



TLDEF Wins Name Change for Transgender Man in Challenge to Pennsylvania Felony Bar

A Pennsylvania Court of Common Pleas judge for Butler County granted a name change to transgender man, Jordan Hilliard, in a case brought by Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund (TLDEF) and Reed Smith challenging the constitutionality of the state's ban on legal name changes for people with felony convictions.

(Pittsburg August 4, 2023) Late yesterday, a Pennsylvania Court of Common Pleas judge for Butler County granted a name change to transgender man, Jordan Hilliard, in a case brought by Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund (TLDEF) and Reed Smith challenging the constitutionality of the state's ban on legal name changes for people with felony convictions.

"It's too hard to go through life being called a name that doesn't match who I am. I shouldn't have to, and I'm so happy that the judge agreed," said **Jordan Hilliard**. "I've been trying to get my name changed for ten years now. Having the wrong name on my ID has made everything harder, from filling prescriptions to keeping a job. It means so much that the judge heard me, and now I can finally move forward. Having my name changed has never been about getting around the system but having respect and being safe within the system."

The Pennsylvania felony bar prevents people with certain felony convictions from ever changing their name, and it prevents people with other felony convictions from obtaining a name change until at least two years have passed since the completion of their sentence.

"We are grateful to the court for diligently and thoughtfully reviewing the evidence and granting Jordan's name change. Coming after similar victories in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, this outcome underscores that the felony bar is unjust and inconsistent with the constitution," said TLDEF Litigation Director **Gabriel Arkles**.

"In a moment when anti-transgender hate seems to be at an all-time high, removing unnecessary legal barriers to existence, such as the felony bar in Pennsylvania is an important step towards preserving the safety and dignity of transgender people," said TLDEF Senior Counsel Sydney Duncan. "Whether you are getting stopped by police, going to the doctor's office, or opening a bank account, having identity documents that accurately reflect who you are only makes our communities safer."

Jordan Hilliard filed a petition for his name change in 2013 and again in February 2022. In May 2022, the Butler County Court of Common Pleas denied that petition. In November 2022, TLDEF, along with co-counsel Reed Smith, appealed the decision in Pennsylvania Superior Court and the case was remanded back to trial court. After an evidentiary hearing on Tuesday, the court issued a decision granting Jordan Hilliard's name change.

In December 2021, the Philadelphia County Court of Common Pleas granted a name change for a transgender petitioner over the felony bar. One week later, the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas did the same and expressly declared the felony bar to be unconstitutional.

"First and foremost, we are very happy for Jordan," said **Patrick Yingling**, Reed Smith attorney. "We are also gratified to have yet another ruling that grants a name change over the felony bar, a law that violates the Pennsylvania Constitution and should not stand in the way of anyone who seeks a name change."

TLDEF Litigation Director Gabriel Arkles and Senior Counsel Sydney Duncan are handling this matter. They are joined by Patrick Yingling and Zachary Roman from Reed Smith.

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