

# Chapman and Cutler LLP

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## **Bill Expanding Protections for Domestic Abuse Survivors in Illinois Advances with Chapman Support**

*Chapman attorney plays key role in supporting name change legislation SB 2330.*

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CHICAGO, February 21, 2018 — Chapman and Cutler LLP attorney Sara Ghadiri has played a key role in supporting legislation to expand protections to survivors of domestic abuse and stalking. The Illinois Senate passed Senate Bill 2330 today, which would amend current state law to permit courts to waive the publication requirement in name-change petitions for victims of domestic abuse or stalking. The bill is now headed to the Illinois House of Representatives and, if it passes there, to the Governor for further consideration.

The idea to pursue legislative action was inspired by a question posed to Ghadiri from a woman who had fled her abuser and wanted to start over in Illinois with a new name so that it would be more difficult for her abuser to track her down. Ghadiri, a commercial litigator whose pro bono practice centers around helping survivors of domestic abuse, advised that current Illinois law requires petitioners to publicize their name changes for at least three weeks in the petitioner's local newspaper — there is no waiver available for people who are or have been protected under orders of protection. Of the 35 states that do require publication of name changes, 21 provide waivers — either waivers specifically for victims of abuse or instances where publication could be waived for good cause.

Enter Toi Hutchinson, Illinois State Senator (D-40th District), who also serves as Chapman's Director of Community Relations and Social Responsibility. Ghadiri asked Senator Hutchinson for advice on the process of changing the law in this area. "The first thing you need to do is tell a legislator," said Senator Hutchinson, and the process was set in motion. Senator Hutchinson and Illinois Senate staff helped Ghadiri through the bill drafting process.

"For people trying to get away from dangerous situations the current name change publication requirement literally broadcasts where they are," said Senator Hutchinson. "This is a small thing that we can do to have a huge impact on helping people when they are trying to rebuild their lives, protect their families, and stay safe."

Senate Bill 2330 would create an exception to the Illinois publication requirement for people who are or have been protected under the Illinois Domestic Violence Act of 1986, the Stalking No Contact Order Act, and several other existing Illinois statutes that serve to protect those who have experienced domestic abuse or stalking. The statute, as proposed, would add Illinois to the group of states that recognize further protections for individuals for whom publication poses a great risk of being found by an abuser, stalker, or harasser. Ghadiri testified before the Illinois Senate Judiciary Committee on February 6. “A publication waiver could help people in these circumstances,” noted Ghadiri in her Committee testimony, “but in Illinois, no such law exists.” The Judiciary Committee unanimously passed Senate Bill 2330, setting up the vote in the Illinois Senate on February 21.

Tim Mohan, Chapman’s Chief Executive Partner, echoed the firm’s commitment to deploying the talent of Chapman attorneys to help individuals who have no other place to turn. “A bedrock of our profession is the protection of human rights. We are extremely proud of Sara’s work and initiative and the work of all Chapman attorneys to help people in need.”

### **About Chapman and Cutler LLP**

The representation of financial institutions has been central to Chapman and Cutler’s practice since its founding in 1913. Starting from a base of banking and public finance, the firm and its practice areas have grown and evolved to become a sophisticated provider of legal services to banks, corporations, insurance companies, investment funds, and other participants in the financial services sector. Today, Chapman has offices in Charlotte, Chicago, New York, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, and Washington, DC, dedicated to representing financial services clients with respect to transactional, regulatory, tax, and litigation matters. The firm is a committed community partner, providing more than \$1 million in free legal services annually.

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