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Governor Signs Bill Supported by Chapman That Expands Protections for Domestic Abuse Survivors

Chapman attorney plays key role in supporting Illinois name change legislation

CHICAGO, August 13, 2018 — Chapman and Cutler LLP attorney Sara Ghadiri has played a key role in supporting legislation to expand protections for survivors of domestic abuse and stalking. Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner signed Senate Bill 2330 into law on August 10, 2018, amending current state law to permit courts to waive the publication requirement in name-change petitions for victims of domestic abuse or stalking. The new law goes into effect January 1, 2019.

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 Illinois law had required petitioners to publicize their name changes for at least three weeks in the petitioner's local newspaper — there was 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 had provided 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.

"I'm very proud of this bill and want to thank my colleagues in the Illinois Senate and the House of Representatives and the Governor for recognizing that a seemingly small change in waiving the publication requirement for people in dangerous situations can have a huge impact in helping them feel safe and confident as they rebuild their lives," said Senator Hutchinson.

The new law creates 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 adds 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.

“The protections offered by this law are life-changing and further support the safety and well-being of domestic abuse survivors and their families,” said Ghadiri, whose pro bono work was recently recognized with Chapman’s Pro Bono and Volunteer Achievement Award. “I was honored to have been involved in drafting and testifying in support of this legislation and thank the Illinois Legislature, the Governor, and all those behind the scenes who supported this important initiative.”

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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