## IN THE CHANCERY COURT FOR THE STATE OF TENNESSEE TWENTIETH JUDICIAL DISTRICT, DAVIDSON COUNTY

JANE DOE,	)	
Plaintiff/Petitioner,	)	Case No.
vs.	)	
TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF	)	
SAFETY AND HOMELAND	)	
SECURITY; JEFF LONG, in his	)	
official capacity as the Commissioner	)	
of Tennessee's Department of Safety	)	
and Homeland Security; and MICHAEL	)	
HOGAN, in his official capacity as the	)	
Assistant Commissioner of the Driver	)	
Services Division for Tennessee's	)	
Department of Safety and Homeland	)	
Security,	)	
	)	
Defendants/Respondents.	)	

#### PLAINTIFF'S MOTION FOR LEAVE TO PROCEED BY PSEUDONYM AND BRIEF IN SUPPORT

Pursuant to Local Rule § 6.04, Plaintiff Jane Doe respectfully moves this Court for an order permitting her to bring this action pseudonymously to protect her identity from public disclosure. Plaintiff Jane Doe respectfully submits the following brief in support of her motion, as well as an affidavit stating specific facts as to why pseudonymity is necessary and the presumption of public access to the identities of litigants should be overcome. *See* Local Rule 6.04.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Plaintiff Jane Doe is a transgender woman who resides in Tennessee. She brings this action seeking relief from the invalid and unconstitutional enforcement of Tennessee Department of Homeland Security rule DLP-302(E)(3) (referred to in the Complaint as the "Redefinition of Sex

Rule") which has been deployed by Defendants to deny her request to change her gender marker on her driver's license.

Plaintiff seeks leave to proceed pseudonymously in this action to protect her privacy and safety, avoid exposure to discrimination and harassment, and prevent retaliatory discrimination in her workplace. As a transgender woman, Plaintiff is a member of a group subject to frequent discrimination, harassment, and violence on account of her transgender status.

Accordingly, Plaintiff respectfully asks this Court for permission to bring this action using an assumed name for the purpose of protecting her identity from public disclosure. Plaintiff also moves the Court to order Defendants to maintain the confidentiality of her identity by using only pseudonyms in all filings, including exhibits in which her name appears, until otherwise directed by the Court or according to a Court-approved protective order. Plaintiff has no objection, however, to providing her legal name to Defendants and the Court. Finally, in moving to proceed under pseudonym, Plaintiff does not intend to prevent the public from observing the proceedings or rulings of this Court under adequate protections, but only to prevent public disclosure of her identity.

#### **ARGUMENT**

As a general matter, a complaint must state the names of all parties, *see* Tenn. R. Civ. P. 10.01, although "there may be exceptional circumstances warranting some form of anonymity in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> DLP-302(E)(3) was issued by the Tennessee Department of Homeland Security in a document labeled "Guidelines to Proof of Identity," *see* Ex. A attached to Complaint. The designation "DLP" was not defined in that document.

judicial proceedings." *Femedeer v. Haun*, 227 F.3d 1244, 1246 (10th Cir. 2000). For example, Rule 26 of the Tennessee Rules of Civil Procedure specifically recognizes that preventing public disclosure of a party's personal information may be necessary to protect litigants from "annoyance, embarrassment, oppression, or undue burden or expense" during the process of discovery. *See* Tenn. R. Civ. P. 26.03 ("Protective Orders").

Tennessee does not have a statewide rule or statute regarding pseudonymous parties. *But see* Local Rule §6.04. However, Rule 10.01 of the Tennessee Rules of Civil Procedure functions in largely the same manner as Rule 10 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, which has been frequently interpreted by federal courts as allowing plaintiffs to proceed under a pseudonym when necessary. In the absence of controlling state law, Tennessee courts "may look to the interpretation of the comparable federal rules for guidance." *Thomas v. Oldfield*, 279 S.W.3d 259, 262 (Tenn. 2009).

Under federal law, a plaintiff may proceed under a pseudonym if the Court concludes the plaintiff's "privacy interests substantially outweigh the presumption of open judicial proceedings." *Doe v. Porter*, 370 F.3d 558, 560 (6th Cir. 2004). The Sixth Circuit has identified a non-exhaustive list of factors courts may consider in determining whether "special circumstances" exist to overcome the presumption of public access to judicial proceedings, including:

(1) whether the plaintiffs seeking anonymity are suing to challenge governmental activity; (2) whether prosecution of the suit will compel the plaintiffs to disclose information of the utmost intimacy; (3) whether the litigation compels plaintiffs to disclose an intention to violate the law, thereby risking criminal prosecution; and (4) whether the plaintiffs are children.

*Porter*, 370 F. 3d at 560. Courts may also exercise discretion to consider additional factors that indicate that the moving party's interest in privacy substantially outweighs the presumption of public access. *Id.* Many of the *Porter* factors are present here, along with other factors unique to the circumstance of this case, including fear of the stigmatizing effect of disclosing one's transgender identity in the State of Tennessee and fear of retaliation at work.

## I. Plaintiff's Privacy Interests Substantially Outweigh the Presumption of Public Access to Judicial Proceedings.

#### A. Plaintiff Challenges Government Activity.

When plaintiffs challenge government activity, they encounter a higher degree of public exposure than they would if they sued a private party. This increased publicity could result in public attacks. In *Porter*, this factor weighed in favor of pseudonymity because the *Porter* plaintiffs sued their local school district and would have been forced to "reveal their beliefs about a particularly sensitive topic that could subject them to considerable harassment." *Porter*, 370 F.3d at 560. Indeed, members of the *Porter* plaintiffs' community had already engaged in a harassment campaign concerning plaintiffs' religious beliefs in local news media. *Id.* Here, Plaintiff Doe similarly fears the necessarily public nature of suing a government entity and the revelation of a "particularly sensitive topic," which could expose her to "considerable harassment." *See* Dec. of Cameron-Vaughn ¶ 12. Thus, this factor weighs in Plaintiff's favor.

### B. Without Pseudonymity Plaintiff Will Be Compelled to Disclose Highly Sensitive and Personal Information.

Courts have recognized that a person's transgender status is of an "excruciatingly private and intimate nature" that "is really beyond debate" "for persons who wish to preserve privacy in

the matter." *Powell v. Schriver*, 175 F.3d 107, 111 (2d Cir. 1999); *see also Arroyo Gonzalez v. Rossello Nevares*, 305 F. Supp. 3d 327, 333 (D.P.R. 2018) (holding that "forced disclosure of a transgender person's most private information"—that being "their transgender status"—violates "their constitutional right to informational privacy"); *Love v. Johnson*, 146 F. Supp. 3d 848, 856 (E.D. Mich. 2015) (finding that "requiring Plaintiffs to disclose their transgender status...directly implicates their fundamental right of privacy"); *K.L. v. State*, 2012 WL 2685183, at \*6 (Alaska Super. Ct. Mar. 12, 2012) ("The Court agrees that one's transgender[] status is private, sensitive personal information" and "is entitled to protection."). Simply put, one's gender identity is "among the most intimate parts of one's life." *Doe v. Blue Cross & Blue Shield of R.I.*, 794 F. Supp. 72, 74 (D.R.I. 1992). "Disclosing that one is transgender involves a deep personal choice which the government cannot compel, unless disclosure furthers a valid public interest." *Arroyo Gonzalez*, 305 F. Supp. 3d at 333.

Recognizing the highly personal and sensitive nature of a person's transgender status, courts have routinely allowed transgender litigants to proceed under pseudonyms. *See, e.g.,* Temporary Order Allowing Pseudonym Litigation, *Bridge v. Oklahoma State Department of Education*, No. CIV-22-00787-JD (W.D. Okla. Sept. 12, 2022), ECF No. 11; *Foster v. Andersen,* 2019 WL 329548, at \*2 (D. Kan. Jan. 25, 2019); *F.V. v. Barron*, 286 F. Supp. 3d 1131 (D. Idaho 2018); *Doe v. D.C.,* 2016 WL 6088262 (D.D.C. Oct. 18, 2016); *Love,* 146 F. Supp. 3d 848; *Doe v. United Consumer Fin. Servs.,* 2001 WL 34350174 (N.D. Ohio Nov. 9, 2001); *Blue Cross,* 794 F. Supp. at 74 (allowing transgender plaintiff to proceed pseudonymously because "[a]s a transsexual, plaintiff's privacy interest is both precious and fragile, and this Court will not

cavalierly permit its invasion"); *Doe v. Alexander*, 510 F. Supp. 900 (D. Minn. 1981); *McClure v. Harris*, 503 F. Supp. 409 (N.D. Cal. 1980), *rev'd on other grounds, sub nom. Schweiker v. McClure*, 456 U.S. 188 (1982); *Doe v. McConn*, 489 F. Supp. 76, 77 (S.D. Tex. 1980).

Plaintiff is a transgender woman. See Dec. of Cameron-Vaughn ¶¶ 11-12. Accordingly, this factor weighs heavily in Plaintiff's favor.

The last two *Porter* factors—whether the Plaintiff is a minor child or would be forced to reveal criminal intent—are inapposite in this case. But, "[t]he *Porter* factors [are not] exhaustive, and the court has the discretion to consider whether any other special circumstances warrant permitting the plaintiff to proceed under a pseudonym." *Doe v. Metro. Gov't of Nashville & Davidson Cnty.*, No. 3:20-CV-01023, 2022 WL 2293898, at \*4 (M.D. Tenn. June 24, 2022).

## C. Disclosure of Plaintiff's Identity Would Expose Her to the Risk of Stigmatization, Discrimination, Harassment, and Violence.

Additional relevant factors weigh strongly in favor of permitting Plaintiff to proceed pseudonymously. Courts have recognized that real danger of physical harm is an "exceptional circumstance warranting some form of anonymity in judicial proceedings." *Femedeer*, 227 F.3d at 1246; *M.M.*, 139 F.3d at 803; *see also Doe v. USD No. 237 Smith Ctr. Sch. Dist.*, 2017 WL 3839416, at \*11 (D. Kan. Sept. 1, 2017). Although risk to one's personal or professional reputation may not, standing alone, constitute sufficient injury to permit a plaintiff to proceed pseudonymously, *see Lindsey*, 592 F.2d at 1125, involuntary disclosure of a person's transgender status "exposes transgender individuals to a substantial risk of stigma, discrimination, intimidation, violence, and danger." *Arroyo Gonzalez*, 305 F. Supp. 3d at 333; *see also F. V.*, 286 F. Supp. 3d at 1137. As numerous courts have recognized, "[t]he hostility and discrimination that transgender

individuals face in our society today is well documented." *Brocksmith v. United States*, 99 A.3d 690, 698 n.8 (D.C. 2014); *see also Whitaker By Whitaker v. Kenosha Unified Sch. Dist. No. 1 Bd. of Educ.*, 858 F.3d 1034, 1051 (7th Cir. 2017) ("There is no denying that transgender individuals face discrimination, harassment, and violence because of their gender identity."); *Karnoski v. Trump*, 2018 WL 1784464, at \*10 (W.D. Wash. Apr. 13, 2018) ("The history of discrimination and systemic oppression of transgender people in this country is long and well-recognized."); *Love*, 146 F. Supp. 3d at 856 (noting "there is a great deal of animosity towards the transgender community"); *Adkins v. City of N.Y.*, 143 F. Supp. 3d 134, 139 (S.D.N.Y. 2015) ("[T]ransgender people have suffered a history of persecution and discrimination...this is 'not much in debate." (citation omitted)).

These generally recognized dangers are present in Tennessee. Indeed, numerous individuals have been murdered in Tennessee because they are transgender, see, e.g., Madeleine Roberts, HRC Mourns Angel Unique, Black Trans Woman Killed in Memphis, Tenn., Human Rights Campaign, Nov. 2, 2020, https://www.hrc.org/news/hrc-mourns-angel-unique-black-transwoman-killed-in-memphis-tenn; Jose Soto, Remembering Danyale Thompson, Black Trans Tragically 22, Woman Killed, Human Rights Campaign, Nov. 2021, https://www.hrc.org/news/remembering-danyale-thompson-black-trans-woman-tragically-killed.

Because of the real risks of discrimination, harassment, and violence transgender people face on account of their transgender status, courts regularly have allowed transgender plaintiffs to proceed under pseudonyms. *See, e.g., Blue Cross*, 794 F. Supp. at 73 (noting that "in this era of seemingly increased societal intolerance," the court "will not strip plaintiff of the cloak of privacy

which shields him from the stigmatization he might otherwise endure"); *In re E.P.L.*, 891 N.Y.S .2d 619, 621 (Sup. Ct. 2009) (shielding the publication of a transgender individual's name in seeking a court order regarding a name change based upon his "right to feel threatened for his personal safety in the event his transgender status is made public"). Indeed, the "most compelling situations involve matters which are highly sensitive, such as social stigmatization, real danger of physical harm, or where the injury litigated against would occur as a result of the disclosure of the plaintiff's identity." *Blue Cross*, 794 F. Supp. at 74 (citation omitted).

Plaintiff's well-founded fears are based on the widespread misunderstanding of, and hostility towards, transgender persons, which has resulted in discrimination and harassment, as well as the prevalence of violence against transgender individuals. Cf. Doe v. Stegall, 653 F.2d 180, 186 (5th Cir. 1981) ("[T]hreats of violence generated by this case, in conjunction with the other factors weighing in favor of maintaining the Does' anonymity, tip the balance against the customary practice of judicial openness."). The threat of physical harm to transgender individuals due to the disclosure of their transgender status is real. As one court recognized, "there exist numerous documented instances of those targeted for violence based on their...gender identity." In re E.P.L., 891 N.Y.S.2d at 621. Based on the above, Ms. Doe's fears that she will be exposed to an increased risk of discrimination, harassment, and even violence should her transgender status become publicly known are eminently reasonable, especially because the harm threatened is particularly severe. See, e.g., Colbi Edmonds and Adeel Hassan, What We Know About the Death Nonbinary Student in Oklahoma, New York Times, March 15, 2024, https://www.nytimes.com/article/nex-benedict-oklahoma.html.

### D. Disclosure of Plaintiff's Identity Would Expose Her to the Risk of Retaliation at Work.

Tennessee courts have allowed plaintiffs to proceed by pseudonym where they fear retaliation or embarrassment in their workplace. *See Doe v. HCA Health Servs. of Tennessee, Inc.*, 46 S.W.3d 191, 194 n. 1 (Tenn. 2001) (permitting pseudonymity because "'Mrs. Doe'" is employed in a physician's office, and she feared that public disclosure of her identity might subject her employer to retaliation and/or embarrassment.").

Plaintiff works in a small, government office in the county in which she resides. Dec. of Cameron-Vaughn ¶ 9. Her position is public facing, and the county in which she resides has fewer than 50,000 people. Id. at 8. Revealing her identity and her status as a transgender woman could, as argued above, not only expose her to public harassment but also adverse employment actions at work. Id. at ¶¶ 11-12.

# E. Granting Plaintiff's Request to Proceed Pseudonymously Is in the Public's Interest and Would Cause No Prejudice to Defendants.

Protecting constitutional rights is of the utmost public interest, and lawsuits seeking to vindicate those rights by definition serve the public. The "ultimate test" to determine whether a plaintiff may proceed anonymously is "whether the plaintiff has a substantial privacy right which outweighs the 'customary and constitutionally-embedded presumption of openness in judicial proceedings." *Roe v. Catholic Health Initiatives Colo.*, 2012 WL 12840, at \*5 (D. Colo. Jan. 4, 2012). Plaintiff seeks to vindicate and protect her constitutional and statutory rights, which apply to all persons in Tennessee. Forcing an individual to disclose such private and personal information would dissuade other similarly-situated individuals from bringing such claims. *Cf.* 

Doe v. Stand. Ins. Co., 2015 WL 5778566, at \*3 (D. Me. Oct. 2, 2015) ("To deny Plaintiff's request under the circumstances of this case might not only prevent Plaintiff from proceeding on her claim, but might also discourage others...from asserting their claims.").

Plaintiff does not seek to restrict the public's general right to access the filings, proceedings, and rulings in this case. Plaintiff's request is narrowly tailored to prevent solely the disclosure of her identity. "Particularly when the public will have access to the facts relevant to the parties' arguments and the Court's ultimate decision in the case, an order permitting Plaintiff to proceed under a pseudonym will not unreasonably interfere with the public's interest in access to judicial records and will promote the public's interest" by protecting every individual's constitutional rights. *Stand. Ins. Co.*, 2015 WL 5778566, at \*3.

Furthermore, Plaintiff does not seek to withhold her identity from Defendants or the Court but only to proceed pseudonymously to prevent disclosure of Plaintiff's identity in public documents. *Cf Citizens for a Strong Ohio v. Marsh*, 123 F. App'x 630, 636 (6th Cir. 2005) (considering prejudice to defendants as factor). Allowing Plaintiff to proceed by pseudonym obviously will not prejudice Defendants; Defendants will know Plaintiff's identity. "[I]t is unclear how [the Court's grant of the requested relief] would ... hinder [] [Defendants'] preparation" of the case, as Defendants here would still be able "to obtain all the information necessary to address" the issues in this case without public disclosure of Plaintiff's name. *Porter*, 370 F.3d at 561; *see also Doe v. United Services Life Ins. Co.*, 123 F.R.D. 437, 439 (S.D.N.Y. 1988) (granting motion to proceed under pseudonym where defendant "already kn[e]w Doe's true identity").

#### **CONCLUSION**

The highly sensitive and private nature of the information at issue, and the history of violence, discrimination, and other harm to transgender individuals and those who defend and associate with them all support granting leave for Movant to proceed pseudonymously in this case. Granting this motion will not prejudice Defendants or the public. For these and the foregoing reasons, Movant respectfully requests that the Court grant her motion to proceed pseudonymously.

Plaintiff also moves the court to order Defendants to maintain the confidentiality of her identity by using only pseudonyms in all of its filings, including all exhibits in which her name appears.

Motion for Protective Order forthcoming.

Respectfully submitted,

ipreptit@aclu-tn.org

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**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE** 

I hereby certify that a true and accurate copy of the foregoing Plaintiff's Motion

for Leave to Proceed by Pseudonym and Brief in Support has been sent by U.S. Mail,

postage pre-paid, and via electronic mail to the following:

Lizabeth Hale

Deputy General Counsel & Director of Legal Services

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DATE: April 23, 2024

/s/ Lucas Cameron-Vaughn

Lucas Cameron-Vaughn

#### **EXHIBIT 1**

# Affidavit of Lucas Cameron-Vaughn in Support of Plaintiff's Motion to Proceed by Pseudonym

# IN THE CHANCERY COURT FOR THE STATE OF TENNESSEE TWENTIETH JUDICIAL DISTRICT, DAVIDSON COUNTY

JANE DOE,	)	
Plaintiff/Petitioner,	)	Case No.
vs.	į	
TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF	)	
SAFETY AND HOMELAND	)	
SECURITY; JEFF LONG, in his	)	
official capacity as the Commissioner	)	
of Tennessee's Department of Safety	)	
and Homeland Security; and MICHAEL	)	
HOGAN, in his official capacity as the	)	
Assistant Commissioner of the Driver	)	
Services Division for Tennessee's	)	
Department of Safety and Homeland	)	
Security,	)	
-	)	
Defendants/Respondents.	)	

# AFFIDAVIT OF LUCAS CAMERON-VAUGHN IN SUPPORT OF PLAINTIFF'S MOTION TO PROCEED BY PSEUDONYM

Pursuant to Rule 72 of the Tennessee Rules of Civil Procedure, I, Lucas Cameron-Vaughn, state as follows under penalty of perjury:

- 1. I am over twenty-one years of age.
- 2. I am competent to testify to the matters stated herein.
- 3. I have personal knowledge of the matters stated herein.
- I am a staff attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union of Tennessee (ACLU-TN).
   ACLU-TN represents Plaintiff Doe in this lawsuit.
- 5. I respectfully submit this affidavit in support of Plaintiff's Motion to Proceed by Pseudonym.

- 6. This case arises from the illegal and invalid application of an unconstitutional rule which was never properly promulgated by the Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland security, as well as other named defendants who are all government officials and employees.
- 7. Plaintiff Jane Doe is a resident of Tennessee.
- 8. She resides in a small county (with a population of less than 50,000 people) in Eastern Tennessee.
- 9. Plaintiff Doe is employed by a government entity in the field of emergency services.
- 10. In this role, Plaintiff Doe regularly interacts with members of the public.
- 11. Plaintiff Doe fears that her employer may take adverse action against her if her identity as a litigant in this case and as a transgender woman is revealed.
- 12. Plaintiff further desires to protect her identity as a transgender woman in the interest of preventing harassment, public threats, and violence that is frequently directed towards transgender people in Tennessee.
- 13. Plaintiff has experienced harassment and discrimination in public context previously when her transgender status has been disclosed, such as by being denied services and having to endure slurs from strangers.
- 14. Defendants are not prejudiced by Plaintiff seeking to protect her identity from public disclosure because Plaintiff will disclose her identity to Defendants and this Court.
- 15. Further, Plaintiff does not seek to seal this case, or shield facts from the public, but only to prevent disclosure of her name publicly.

Further Affiant sayeth naught.

Lucas Cameron-Vaughn

State of Tennessee County of Davidson

Sworn to and subscribed before me this bday of April, 2024.

STATE OF TENNESSEE NOTARY OF PUBLIC OF TENNESSEE NOTARY OF THE TENNESS

Notary Public

My Commission Expires: 7/6/26

#### **EXHIBIT 2**

#### **Proposed Order**

# IN THE CHANCERY COURT FOR THE STATE OF TENNESSEE TWENTIETH JUDICIAL DISTRICT, DAVIDSON COUNTY

JANE DOE,	)	
Plaintiff/Petitioner,	)	Case No.
VS.	)	
TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF	)	
SAFETY AND HOMELAND	)	
SECURITY; JEFF LONG, in his	)	
official capacity as the Commissioner	)	
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and Homeland Security; and MICHAEL	)	
HOGAN, in his official capacity as the	)	
Assistant Commissioner of the Driver	)	
Services Division for Tennessee's	)	
Department of Safety and Homeland	)	
Security,	)	
	)	
Defendants/Respondents.	)	

# [PROPOSED] ORDER AUTHORIZING MOVANT TO PROCEED BY PSEUDONYM

THIS MATTER came before the Court on Plaintiff's Motion for Leave to Proceed by Pseudonym and Brief in Support. Movant moves the Court for permission to proceed in this action under the pseudonym "Jane Doe."

The Court, having considered Movant's motion and supporting memorandum, and the entire record in this case, and having considered Defendants' opposition thereto, finds there is good cause to grant Movant's motion and hereby **ORDERS**:

1. Movant may proceed in this action under the pseudonym "Jane Doe."

- 2. Movant's counsel shall disclose Movant's true name and, to the extent otherwise discoverable under the Tennessee Rules of Civil Procedure, other information that identifies Movant, directly or indirectly ("Identifying Information"), upon request to Defendants' counsel and the Court.
- 3. All publicly-filed documents shall identify Movant only by Movant's pseudonym.
- 4. All documents filed with the Court that contain Movant's name or Identifying Information shall be redacted.
- 5. Defendants' counsel may disclose Identifying Information to Defendants, Defendants' employees, and experts retained in this action, but only to the minimum extent necessary to litigate this action.
- 6. Individuals to whom Identifying Information is disclosed shall not further disclose that information to any other person without first obtaining written confirmation from Movant's counsel that such disclosure is necessary to litigate this action.
- 7. Under no circumstances shall any person disclose Identifying Information to the media without the express written consent of Movant's counsel.
- 8. Before disclosing Identifying Information to any person for purposes of litigating this action, Defendants' counsel shall give that person a copy of this order, require that person to read this order, specifically point out to that person the provisions of section 6 and 7 of this order, and specifically warn that person that violation of this order may result in sanctions for contempt of court.

9. If any specific issues related to non-disclosure of Identifying Information arise during the course of litigation, the parties shall seek to resolve those issues without court intervention. If the parties cannot agree, they shall seek further clarification from this Court.

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CHANCELLOR	
DATE:	