

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF RHODE ISLAND

JOHN DOE, :  
Plaintiff :  
 :  
v. : No. 1:20-cv-191-MSM-LDA  
 :  
BROWN UNIVERSITY, :  
Defendant :

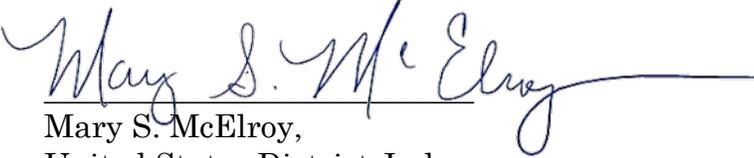
ORDER

Without filing for leave to do so, John Doe, on behalf of himself and a putative class of similarly-situated Brown University students, filed this action using a pseudonym, in violation of Fed.R.Civ.P. 10(a). The University objects and has requested Mr. Doe to show cause why he should be able to proceed without disclosing his name. A party seeking to proceed anonymously bears a heavy burden to overcome the presumption of public disclosure of his name. An “overriding reason for confidentiality” can surmount that presumption, if it appears the party may suffer harassment, a likelihood of injury, discrimination, or other articulable and non-speculative harm. *Doe v. Prudential Insurance Company of America*, 744 F. Supp. 40, 41-42 (D.R.I. 1990) (desire to protect the privacy of a deceased child who died of AIDS understandable but not sufficient). Mr. Doe’s claims here that he may suffer stigma or other harm are entirely speculative in comparison to the fears of a

transsexual in 1990 seeking medical insurance benefits. *Doe v. Blue Cross & Blue Shield of R.I.*, 764 F. Supp. 72 (D.R.I. 1992) (leave to proceed by pseudonym granted, citing interest in sexual privacy and documented discrimination). He has submitted nothing to substantiate a legitimate fear of retaliation from fellow students or others on or off campus. *See* ECF No. 19, Exh. B.

Brown University's Motion to Require Mr. Doe to Show Cause (ECF No. 14) is GRANTED and I find no cause has been shown to excuse the requirement of Fed. R. Civ. P. 10(a). In accordance with the request of the plaintiff, he has fourteen (14) days in which to re-submit his complaint properly styled or to dismiss it if he decides not to proceed.

IT IS SO ORDERED:

  
Mary S. McElroy,  
United States District Judge

July 23, 2020