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February 26, 2020

HB 661 – Notaries Public Fund

Favorable with Amendments

Madam Chair, Madam Vice Chair and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

The Maryland Land Title Association applauds the creation of The Notary Public Fund as a means to assist the office of the Secretary of State in overseeing the registration, and education of notaries public in the State. We would be remiss, however, not to express concern over the use of the funds. The Association has had long experience with a similar dedicated fund for Land Record improvements that grew rapidly during a period of heavy settlement activity and was then diverted to other needs for which there were insufficient monies in a general fund. This diversion reached a point that the special fund had to be increased to avoid depletion and Land Records needs may have received insufficient funding.

While we appreciate the challenges associated with the efficient use of taxpayer money, fees flowing into The Notary Public Fund will not be constant, but will instead ebb and flow with the registration and re-registration of notaries public. As the term “Title” is not found within the definitions of the State Government Article, we therefore urge that the bill be amended to read:

“(G)THE FUND MAY BE USED ONLY TO COVER THE EXPENSES,INCLUDING ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES,OF THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE IN CARRYING OUT THE DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE UNDER ~~THIS TITLE~~ TITLES 18 AND 19 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE.”

This will protect against the temptation, however well intentioned, to use The Notary Public Fund monies for other responsibilities or endeavors of the Secretary of State’s Office.