



## GRACE G. CONNOLLY

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January 24, 2020

Delegate Luke Clippinger, Chair  
House Judiciary Committee  
Room 101  
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401  
House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: House Bill 339  
Task Force to Study the Orphans' Court

Dear Delegate Clippinger and Members of the Committee:

I write today as a former Judge of 12 years in the Baltimore County Orphans' Court, and with more than 20 years of experience as the current Register of Wills for Baltimore County, to request you recommend an Unfavorable Committee Report on House Bill 339, which creates a Task Force to Study the Maryland Orphans' Court.

Quite simply, I don't believe a Task Force is necessary.

The Orphans' Court for Baltimore County consists of three Judges, elected by the people of Baltimore County, who are able, qualified and professional. By law they are required to be attorneys.

The Register of Wills in Baltimore County, and our Orphans' Court are the busiest in the State of Maryland. We consistently have the highest volume of cases, due to our large population and high percentage of senior citizens amongst that population.

Page 2 of 2  
Connolly to Pendergrass  
Re: HB 339


Our Register of Wills office and Orphans' Court work well together and, we think, serve the people of Baltimore County efficiently. Administration Accounts are promptly reviewed by auditors and Judges, Petitions that require hearings are set efficiently, and communication between the Register's office and the Court is constant.

Although the establishment of an Orphans' Court is required by state statutes and the Maryland Constitution, the Courts are funded by the local jurisdiction to meet the needs of that jurisdiction. A state Task Force to Study the Orphans' Court seems unnecessary as if changes need to be made in a specific jurisdiction bases on that jurisdiction's population, resources, and needs – those changes are best made on a county by county basis.

As someone who has worked with the administration of estates for more than 30 years, I implore you to recommend an unfavorable committee report on HB 339. If a particular jurisdiction is having trouble with their Orphans' Court, or the way probate matters are adjudicated, let them study the matter and make changes accordingly. My experience tells me that no one set of recommendations will serve all counties, and may unintentionally damage the work we do here in Baltimore County.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Grace G. Connolly  
Baltimore County Register of Wills