

February 11, 2020

House Judiciary Committee
Hon. Luke Clippinger, Chair
Maryland House of Delegates
Room 101
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland

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

Dear Chairman Clippinger and Committee Members:

We are writing concerning House Bill 339, concerning the creation of a Task Force to study the Orphans' Court. We are individually elected as the current Judges of the Orphans' Court in Allegany County, Maryland. Judge May is currently serving her 9th term, Judge Crossland is currently serving his 2nd term, and Judge Feldstein was appointed in 2017 and is serving in his first elected term. All of us ran unopposed this past election.

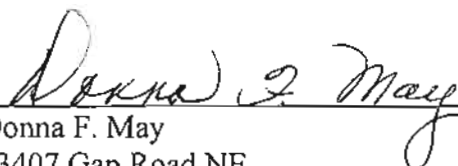
Speaking for our jurisdiction, we do not feel that there is a need to study the Orphans' Court, as based upon our experience, there have been approximately a half dozen estates that have had appeals filed in the past 5 years; only one of which has been overturned, and our court has handled hundreds of estates from a negligible amount to several million dollars. We have had no complaints from the local bar, the Circuit Court or the Allegany County Commissioners that our performance has been anything less than satisfactory.

The Orphans' Court is unique in that we are able to aptly schedule and rule on matters where persons are in need of an immediate answer, such as when selling a house; attempting to locate a will, or questioning whether or not to pay a claim. Often times, the death of a loved one is a very difficult time for families, and we are able to schedule the necessary time to accommodate them in their difficulty.

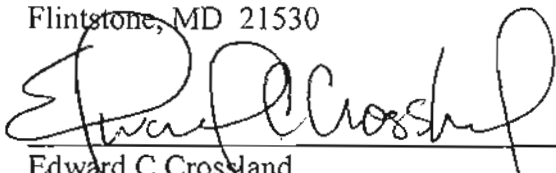
To our knowledge, the legislature has readily considered local changes to the Orphans' Court when necessary, which has been quite beneficial to the residents because it accommodates the diversity in the counties in Maryland. We would have expected any issues to be addressed locally as opposed to a wholesale study, which has been introduced and sponsored by only one of the three delegates representing Allegany County.

We would also express concern with the proposed make-up of the Task Force, which in our opinion, does not allow for enough Orphans' Court judges from the various counties to serve on the Committee.

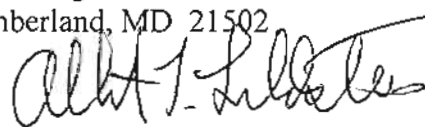
Thank you for your kind attention to this matter.



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cc: Del. Michael McKay
Del. Jason Buckel
Del. Wendell Beitzel