

As a citizen of Howard County, I have serious concerns about HB 868. If the Orphans Court is dissolved and the work is taken on by the Circuit Court, the typical citizen going through probate will have to face problems not currently encountered at the Orphans Court.

Rather than facing a three-person panel made up of both attorneys and lay persons in comfortable surroundings, the citizen “customer” will appear before a far more intimidating Circuit Court. Many would feel compelled to hire an attorney to assist them. In the current arrangement, one may follow the probate process easily without paid legal help.

I also have concerns about the timeliness of the proposed arrangement. With the present Orphans Court, cases are handled swiftly and seldom appealed. If the proposed bill is approved, citizens will face a crowded docket. Probate cases will take longer and run up higher legal fees.

Please consider your constituents facing probate and issue an unfavorable Committee report.