

HB0672 Family Law - Marriage Ceremony - Designation of Deputy Clerk
Judiciary Committee – February 22, 2023
Sponsor: Delegate Karen Toles
Position: Favorable

Testimony of Karen Bushell, Clerk of the Circuit Court, Montgomery County

Thank you, Chairman Clippinger, Vice Chairman Moon, and members of the committee, for this opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 672. For the record, my name is Karen Bushell, Clerk of the Circuit Court for Montgomery County.

The Clerks of the Circuit Court support HB 672, transferring the authority to designate a deputy clerk to perform a marriage ceremony, from the county administrative judge of the circuit court to the clerk of the circuit court in each county.

Generations ago, Judges were involved in performing marriage ceremonies in Maryland. In the 1700's weddings which were not performed by clergy were performed by Judges. However, since at least 1963, this function has largely been transferred to the Clerks of the Circuit Court. Today, the Clerks and our staff issue approximately 30-40,000 marriage licenses and conduct 10-20,000 marriage ceremonies in a typical year. The only involvement of Judges these days is in performing an occasional marriage ceremony themselves, which may amount to a couple of dozen weddings a year. As a practical matter, the Clerks believe that allowing us direct authority to designate our staff to conduct the wedding ceremonies that our office is responsible for, would be more efficient and better reflect current practice.

The Circuit Court Clerks hope you will give a favorable report on HB 672, and we would like to thank Delegate Toles for sponsoring this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to comment, and I am available if you have any questions.