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POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

BILL: SB 575- Court Personnel - Protection of Personal Information (Judge Andrew F. Wilkinson Judicial Security Act)

FROM: Maryland Office of the Public Defender

POSITION: Favorable with Amendment

DATE: 01/30/24

The Maryland Office of the Public Defender (MOPD) urges a favorable report for Senate Bill 575, with an amendment to include attorneys from the Maryland Office of the Public Defender as “Protected Individual[s].”

Senate Bill 575 will protect the information of, and increase security for, current and retired judges, justices, magistrates, and commissioners. The need for this law has unfortunately become apparent, as recent violent attacks and threats affect judges around the country and in Maryland. This would follow recently-enacted federal legislation that protects members of the Federal Judiciary who perform the important function of interpreting the Constitution of the United States and administering justice in a fair and impartial manner. The bill is also important for future recruitment and retention of judges in Maryland, so they can safely seek judgeships and fulfill their obligations without fear of retribution.

Public Defenders tasked with upholding the Constitutional rights of their clients, unfortunately face similar threats and attacks on their persons and their privacy. Throughout Maryland, Public Defenders have been threatened with “doxing,” invasions of privacy, and physical harm. No public servant should fear their safety based solely on the job they carry out. Thus, we urge the Committee to add attorneys for the Maryland Office of the Public Defender to the list of “Protected Individual[s]” and issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 575.

Submitted by: Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Government Relations Division.