

SB0136 Family Law - Marriage Ceremony - Designation of Deputy Clerk
Judicial Proceedings Committee – January 11, 2023
Sponsor: Senator Michael Jackson
Position: Favorable

Testimony of Scott Poyer, Clerk of the Circuit Court, Anne Arundel County

Thank you, Chairman Smith, Vice Chairman Waldstreicher, and members of the committee, for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 136. For the record, my name is Scott Poyer, Clerk of the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County.

The Clerks of the Circuit Court support SB 136, 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 few 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 SB 136, and we would like to thank Senator Jackson for sponsoring this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to comment, and I am available if you have any questions.