

SB0471: Circuit Court Clerks and Registers of Wills – Maximum Salary

Judicial Proceedings – February 12, 2026 @ 1:00 pm

Sponsors: Senator William C. Smith, Jr. and Senator Michael W. McKay

Position: Favorable

Testimony of Kevin Tucker, Clerk of the Circuit Court, Washington County.

Thank you, Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the committee, for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 0471. For the record, my name is Kevin Tucker, Clerk of the Circuit Court for Washington County and past President of the Maryland Circuit Court Clerks' Association. I am here with my colleagues representing the 24 elected Clerks of the Circuit Court in Maryland.

I support SB 0471 because of the small fiscal impact of the requested salary cap. Since the legislature sets the maximum cap on the Clerk's Salary, and the Board of Public Works actually sets the salary for each Clerk of Court, there is no fiscal impact if the Board of Public Works does not increase our salaries.

However, if the Board of Public Works sets our salaries at the maximum under the cap established by SB 0471, it will still have a very small impact on the overall budget for the Judiciary. Even the maximum increase would only equate to approximately five-hundred thousand dollars out of the Judiciary's eight-hundred-million-dollar annual budget. The Judiciary, which supports a salary increase for the Clerks of Court, has already included this funding into the Judiciary's budget request.

It should also be noted that, as elected officials, Article 3, Section 35 of the Maryland Constitution only allows our salaries to be changed once every four years. So, while other State employees, including our staffs, have received Cost of Living and Merit increases over the past four years, the Clerks of Court have not.

SB 0471 ties the Clerks of Courts' salary cap to Grade 26, Step 20 of the Maryland State Employee Salary Schedule, which would give the Clerks of Court only the same increase that all other Judiciary employees have received over the past four years. It would not vault the Clerks of Courts' salaries over those of other employees, but it would bring us into alignment with the salary adjustments all other State employees have received.

In addition, Grade 26, Step 20 is consistent with the salary level of comparable senior leaders in similar positions within the Judiciary. It is also consistent with the salary of the Clerks of both the Supreme Court of Maryland and the Appellate Court of Maryland.

Together the Clerks of the Circuit Court manage almost 1,500 employees, about one third of all personnel in the Judiciary, manage over \$160 million in budgetary expenditures each year, and are considered senior leadership positions within the Judiciary.

I ask for a favorable report on SB 0471, and I would like to thank Senators Smith and McKay for sponsoring this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I am available should you have any questions.
