

SB0471 Circuit Court Clerks and Registers of Wills – Maximum Salary
Judicial Proceedings – February 12, 2026

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

Position: Favorable

Testimony of Dawne Lindsey, Clerk of the Circuit Court, Allegany 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 Dawne Lindsey, Clerk of the Circuit Court for Allegany County. I am also representing the 24 elected Clerks of the Circuit Court in Maryland.

I support SB 0471 because of the advantages of streamlining the process for setting the salary cap for the Clerks. I have been involved in the salary legislation for the Clerks since 2002, and for all of those 20+ years, we have received questions from legislators about whether there is a better way to do it. We think tying the clerk's salary to that of the state employee schedule would accomplish that objective.

As is currently the case, the legislature sets the maximum cap for the clerk's salary, but then the actual salary for each clerk is set by the Board of Public Works (BPW). Under this proposed bill, the BPW is still responsible for setting the Clerk's salary but since the cap is tied to the standard salary schedule for Maryland state employees, the legislature will not need to separately set the cap for the clerks every four years.

The state employee's salary schedule is already subject to analysis and evaluation to ensure it stays in line with the cost of living and general market conditions. This way the salary cap will stay in line with state employee salaries and not become too excessive or too deficient. The legislature has already adopted the option of tying salaries to an existing standard for several other offices whose salary is set in statute. This includes nearly all the State's Attorneys

and the Sheriffs in the state of Maryland. This option has worked well for those other offices and there is no reason to believe it would not work equally well if applied to the Clerks.

And if at some point in the future, the legislature decided for any reason that tying the Clerk's salary cap to the state employee schedule was not working, the legislature could undo it and set a new standard.

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, and I am available if you have any questions.