

Alexis B Rohde Fav SB 471.pdf

Uploaded by: Alexis Burrell-Rohde

Position: FAV



ALEXIS BURRELL-ROHDE

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February 10, 2026

Senator William C. Smith, Jr.
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Support (FAV) – SB 471 – Circuit Court Clerks and Register of Wills – Maximum Salary

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

My name is Alexis Burrell-Rohde. I am the Register of Wills for Baltimore County and President of the Register of Wills Association. I am submitting this written testimony and urge a favorable report from the committee on Senate Bill 471 on behalf of myself and the Register of Wills Association.

SB 471 proposes that the salary of the Register of Wills be tied to a grade and step set forth in State of Maryland's standard salary schedule. Tying the Register of Wills salary to the State's salary schedule would mean that the Registers, like most of our elected judicial colleagues, would no longer need to approach lawmakers every four years to ask for the same cost of living adjustments enjoyed by every other State employee.

Passage of this legislation does not guarantee that any Register or Clerk of the Circuit Court receive a raise as that final decision must be approved by the Board of Public Works, instead the legislation would tie the maximum salary of the Register of Wills to a grade and step, representing cost of living adjustments.

In terms of how we plan to pay for this legislation, the Register of Wills are funded by the inheritance tax, not the general fund of the State. This means that our salary adjustments would not need to be allocated from the State's general fund and our revenue, which rose by nearly \$15 million in FY2025 and is on track to rise by an additional \$26 million in FY2026, can support any cost of living adjustment without need to dip into the State's General Fund.

I respectfully recommend a favorable report on SB 471 and appreciate the Committee's thoughtful attention.

Best regards,

Alexis Burrell-Rohde

Alexis Burrell-Rohde
Register of Wills
Baltimore County

SB471.pdf

Uploaded by: Dawne Lindsey

Position: FAV

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.

Testimony SB0471 Kevin Tucker 02.12.26.pdf

Uploaded by: Kevin Tucker

Position: FAV

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.

Testimony SB0471 Mahasin El Amin Feb 2026 MEA.pdf

Uploaded by: Mahasin El Amin

Position: FAV

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 Mahasin El Amin, Clerk of the Circuit Court, Prince George's County

Thank you, Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the committee, for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 471. For the record, my name is Mahasin El Amin, Clerk of the Circuit Court for Prince George's County. I am also representing the 24 elected Clerks of the Circuit Court.

The Circuit Court Clerks are the administrative arm of the court, but we are truly the heartbeat of the courthouse. We are often the first point of contact for the public. People cannot speak directly to judges, and usually must engage an attorney before obtaining legal advice, which often comes at a cost many cannot afford. While we cannot give legal advice, we can direct people to resources, and most importantly, we listen to their concerns and treat them with kindness and compassion as they navigate a complicated and often intimidating process.

Collectively, Clerks oversee more than 1,500 employees statewide and handle about 200,000 new case filings every year. The job we do, largely behind the scenes, impacts people's lives. Among our many responsibilities, we make sure that millions of pages of documents related to these cases are processed in a timely and efficient manner. When a matter is before a judge, the Clerks are the ones to make sure the case is in the right place at the right time. When a judge sentences a defendant to incarceration, we ensure that sentence is properly recorded so there are no mistakes releasing someone too soon or keeping them longer than they should. We also ensure guardians are assigned to care for vulnerable individuals and process audits to make sure property is not stolen.

Beyond the courtroom, we serve as the recorder of deeds, maintaining land records that drive Maryland's economy. We record transactions worth billions and collect over 400 million dollars in land record revenues annually. Without the circuit court clerks, the real estate market stalls. We also preserve history, people come to us to look up marriage records and land titles. We timely process expungements that give individuals a second chance. In addition, we act as the "justice of the peace," issuing more than 40,000 marriage licenses annually and performing approximately 16,000 ceremonies each year, moments that matter deeply to Maryland families.

I ask for a favorable report on SB 471, and I would like to thank Chairman Smith and Senator McKay for sponsoring this bill.

sb471.pdf

Uploaded by: Will Vormelker

Position: FAV

HON. STACY A. MAYER
CIRCUIT COURT
JUDGE
BALTIMORE COUNTY
CHAIR

HON. RICHARD SANDY
CIRCUIT COURT
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MARYLAND JUDICIAL COUNCIL LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Legislative Committee
William R. Vormelker
410-260-1561
RE: Senate Bill 471
Circuit Court Clerks and Registers of Wills – Maximum Salary
DATE: February 5, 2026
(2/12)
POSITION: Support

The Maryland Judiciary supports Senate Bill 471 solely with respect to the provisions regarding the salaries of the Clerks of the Circuit Court. The legislation would increase the limit on the maximum salary that the Board of Public Works may set for a Clerk of the Circuit Court from \$146,500 to \$169,081. This would be accomplished by tying the Clerks' salaries to Grade 26 Step 20 of the executive branch salary schedule.

By statute and comparable to other elected state officials, Clerk of the Circuit Court salaries may only increase every four years. Tying the Clerks' salary to the executive salary scale will ensure that the Clerks' receive compensation that is comparable to similar positions in state government, and that the legislature would not need to pass a law every four years to maintain this parity.

The Clerk of the Circuit Court is a locally elected state official who occupies an integral position within the judicial branch of government. Collectively, the 24 Clerks of the Circuit Courts are responsible for processing in excess of 184,000 court filings that generally flow through their offices each year, as well as issuing thousands of business licenses each year. They are also responsible for recording

and maintaining nearly a million land record instruments and plats yearly, as well as recording liens and judgments, state and federal tax liens, civil judgments, and judgments also issued by the United States District Court. The clerks furthermore issue marriage licenses, perform marriage ceremonies, administer the oaths of office to elected and appointed local officials, issue notary public commissions, and process passport applications.

Compared to similar positions in surrounding states, Circuit Court Clerk of Court salaries have fallen behind. For example, the maximum salary for Clerks of the Superior Court in Virginia is \$189,665. The maximum salary increase proposed in Senate Bill 471 would make compensation for Maryland Clerks of Court comparable to Virginia Clerks of Court where a tiered salary structure also exists.

The Clerks of Court are essential to the efficient and effective operation of the circuit courts and, therefore, the criminal and civil justice systems in Maryland. As is evident, clerk offices are responsible for an overwhelming volume of cases and the collection of significant funds both for the state and local jurisdictions, as well as the critical function of accurately recording the transfer of land instruments. The requested salary increase is reasonable, justifiable, and deserved. The Judiciary urges a favorable report.

cc. Hon. William C. Smith, Jr.
Judicial Council
Legislative Committee
Kelley O'Connor