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BALTIMORE COUNTY
CHAIR

HON. RICHARD SANDY
CIRCUIT COURT
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MARYLAND JUDICIAL COUNCIL LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM

TO: House Judiciary Committee
FROM: Legislative Committee
William R. Vormelker
410-260-1561
RE: House Bill 822
Circuit Court Clerks and Registers of Wills – Maximum Salary
DATE: February 5, 2026
(2/18)
POSITION: Support

The Maryland Judiciary supports House Bill 822 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 House Bill 822 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. J. Sandy Bartlett
Judicial Council
Legislative Committee
Kelley O'Connor