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February 18, 2026

The Honorable J. Sandy Bartlett, Chair
Judiciary Committee
100 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB822 – Circuit Court Clerks and Registers of Wills – Maximum Salary – FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Byron Macfarlane, I am the Register of Wills for Howard County, and I serve as Chair of the Legislative Committee of the Maryland Register of Wills Association. I write to express my support for House Bill 822.

This legislation proposes that the salaries of the Clerks of Court and the Registers of Wills be tied to a grade and step set forth in the State of Maryland State and Bargaining Salary Scale. Tying the Clerks' and Registers' salaries to an existing salary schedule established by the State would mean that the Clerks and Registers, like most of our elected judicial colleagues, would no longer need to petition the General Assembly for a change in compensation before each new term. Instead, these offices would be eligible to simply receive the same cost of living adjustments received by every other State employee over the preceding four years.

Passage of this bill does not guarantee that any Clerk or Register will receive a different level of compensation each term, as that final decision rests with the Board of Public Works. Instead, this will establish a new compensation cap for us with the final breakdown of salaries by jurisdiction to be determined by the Governor, Comptroller, and State Treasurer. Please note that the Clerks and Registers, like all elected officials in Maryland, are Constitutionally prohibited from receiving an increase or decrease in compensation during their term of office, so our salaries are set at the beginning of each term and do not change for four years.

To address funding this measure, it is already paid for. The Maryland Judiciary has included the Clerks' potential salary adjustments in their budget and the Registers' revenues have increased substantially over last fiscal year. The Registers are funded by the fees and inheritance taxes that we collect. As of December 31, 2025, halfway through the current fiscal year, our revenue was up nearly \$13 million, a nearly 18% increase from the same point in time the prior year. This increase will fund this legislation with over \$12.3 million remaining being deposited in the General Fund.

To summarize, this legislation streamlines the process for the elected Clerks of the Circuit Courts and Registers of Wills, constitutional officers who play a vital role in our State's system of justice, it brings the process in line with our elected judicial colleagues whose salaries are mostly tied to specific positions and grades and steps in State and local government, and it provides the same cost of living adjustment received by every other hardworking full-time employee of the State of Maryland.

Thank you for your time, attention, and thoughtful consideration of this bill. I respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 822.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Bryan E. Marfatian". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.