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Maryland Circuit Court Clerks' Association

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February 13, 2020

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 East Wing
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401 – 1991

Senate Bill 256 – Circuit Court Real Property Records Improvement Fund – Surcharge on Recordable Instruments

Dear Senator Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Circuit Court Clerks' Association supports Senate Bill 256. This bill removes the July 1, 2020 sunset provision of \$20 of the current \$40 fee. Without the removal of the sunset, the \$40 fee will reduce to \$20 and the result will be the projected exhaustion of the Circuit Court Real Property Records Improvement Fund in fiscal year 2022. Over ten years ago, the Maryland General Assembly designated that all land records functions and the Judiciary's major IT are funded by this fund. Without this fund or alternative funding sources, the Clerks of the Circuit Court for each jurisdiction would not have funding for current staff or resources to record land records instruments. Currently the salaries of approximately 250 employees are provided for by this fund. The real estate industry is dependent on timely recording and electronic access to land records transactions across the state.

The full funding of the Circuit Court Real Property Records Improvement Fund is essential to the land records operations of each county and the City of Baltimore and to other major IT for the Maryland Judiciary. We ask for a favorable report on this bill.

Sincerely,

Katherine B. Hager

Katherine B. Hager
President of the Maryland Circuit Court Clerks' Association