

MARYLAND JUDICIAL CONFERENCE
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Hon. Mary Ellen Barbera
Chief Judge

187 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, MD 21401

MEMORANDUM

TO: House Judiciary Committee
FROM: Legislative Committee
Suzanne D. Pelz, Esq.
410-260-1523
RE: House Bill 484
Courts – Aggravated Murder Court
DATE: January 29, 2020
(2/11)
POSITION: Oppose

The Maryland Judiciary opposes House Bill 484. This bill would amend the state constitution to create a new trial court specifically for the purposes of hearing aggravated murder cases.

The Judiciary believes this legislation would interfere with its power to manage its own affairs and administer the assignment of cases, especially in an area where there has been no demonstrated need for change. The Judiciary is also concerned with the precedent that would be set by amending the state constitution to create specialty courts.

Additionally, this bill raises the question of how an aggravated murder court would be different from a circuit court. For example, how would the process and criteria for judicial appointment and service be different? The Judiciary would be opposed to bifurcating the circuit courts as such action tends to adversely impact the perception of quality of justice, as well as the public's expectations in the resolution of non-special-treatment dockets.

cc. Hon. Rick Impallaria
Judicial Council
Legislative Committee
Kelley O'Connor