TESTIMONY OF H. MARK STICHEL
IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 11 and HOUSE BILL 518

I am a principal in the law firm of Astrachan Gunst Thomas, P.C., and have been a member of the Maryland Bar since 1983. I have been the Chairman of the Baltimore City Sitting Judges Committee since the early 1990s and have worked on sitting judges' campaigns in Baltimore City beginning with the 1986 election.

As a group of Daily Record Editorial Advisory Board members, of which I was a part, recently wrote:

> Judges should not have to run for election. Unlike candidates for the executive or legislative branches of government, judges cannot run on platforms of promises to the electorate. To remain impartial, they cannot express their preferences. Judge have ethical constraints on what they can say publicly about cases. And, running for election costs money, which forces judges to raise campaign funds from the public – usually from lawyers who appear before them.
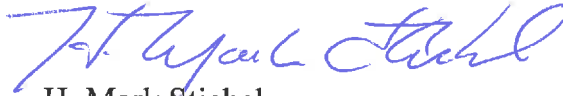
Although some judges are natural campaigners, many judges are not. The skills and personality trait that make for good judges, do not necessarily translate well on the hustings.

House Bill 11 and House Bill 518 do not totally do away with elections. They provide for retention elections. Retention elections obviate many of the difficulties that judges face when running in contested elections. Appointment followed by retention elections has worked well for Maryland's appellate courts and the system should be adopted as well for the Circuit Courts. Thus, I urge that House Bill 11 and House Bill 518 be given favorable reports.

The views that I have expressed in this testimony and in the attached article are my own and do not represent the views of Astrachan Gunst Thomas, P.C., the Baltimore City Sitting Judges Committee and/or any other person or entity.

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