

February 24, 2021.

**Testimony on HB 75
Election of Circuit Court Judges - Nonpartisan Elections
Judiciary**

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports HB 75, which would establish a method of electing judges to the circuit court on a nonpartisan basis, without regard to political party affiliation.

Partisan politics have no place in judicial elections. We believe that judges are to be true to the law, but partisan elections get in the way of their being able to do that. Partisan elections open the door to special interests to spend money influencing their elections and, once elected, the courts. This leads to judicial candidates who are on one side of an interest group or another which can continue through their time on the bench, especially when preparing for reelection.

Much of the respect and trust for the judicial system stems from the view that judges are independent. Partisan elections fail to accomplish that. Nominations become dependent on being sponsored by a political party which opens the door to criteria for the selection of judges other than their ability to neutrally apply the law.

In article penned by a former Chief Justice of Alabama's Supreme Court, she points out that political influence from judges not only comes from party affiliation but also from campaign donations, which become even more necessary as the cost for getting elected in many positions continue to rise. Judicial elections deserve greater scrutiny and eliminating the partisanship in these races would encourage us to instead look at the quality of our judges.

Common Cause Maryland strongly supports effort to move towards an impartial judicial system that citizens can trust where citizens can trust. We support HB 75 and encourage a favorable vote.