

HB0519 Circuit Court Clerks – Salary Increase
Judiciary Committee – March 2, 2022
Sponsors: Delegates Williams and Crutchfield
Position: Favorable

Testimony of Sandra Dalton, Clerk of the Circuit Court, Frederick County

Thank you, Chairman Clippinger and members of the committee for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 519. For the record, my name is Sandra Dalton, Clerk of the Circuit Court for Frederick County. My testimony today is on behalf of the Maryland Circuit Court Clerks' Association, which represents the elected Clerks of the Circuit Court in Maryland.

We are requesting that the legislature raise the salary cap for the elected Clerks of the Circuit Court. I would just like to summarize the many services the elected Clerks of the Circuit Court perform for the citizens of Maryland.

The Circuit Court Clerks perform all the duties of clerks in other courts. This includes recording filings and issuing court documents for approximately 200,00 new cases every year.

The Circuit Court Clerks also perform additional duties that other court clerks do not. This includes recording 700,000 land records, issuing 50,000 business licenses; and issuing 30,000 marriage licenses every year. We also perform civil marriage ceremonies and Administer the Oath of office to our elected officials and Judges.

The Circuit Court Clerks collect almost \$400 million in fees to fund State, County and Local governments every year.

The Circuit Court Clerks employ 1,477 positions, well over 1/3 of all positions in the Judiciary. The largest Clerk's Office has over 300 employees.

I am proud to say that the Clerks kept their offices running throughout the COVID pandemic, ensuring that all functions continued to be performed even while other offices were shut down. This included recording deeds/land records necessary to keep the real estate industry running, as well as issuing marriage and business licenses.

The Clerks are often behind the scenes, but we serve an important role in people's lives, whether it is keeping the courts running, helping new businesses get licensed, assisting couples getting married, or making it possible for people to buy and sell homes. Ours is a fiduciary position, and the Clerk is charged with being the official keeper of the court record.

We ask the committee for a favorable report on HB 519. And we would like to thank Delegates Williams and Crutchfield for sponsoring this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to comment, and I am available to answer any questions you may have.