

**MARYLAND JUDICIAL CONFERENCE
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

Hon. Matthew J. Fader
Chief Justice

187 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, MD 21401

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
FROM: Legislative Committee
Suzanne D. Pelz, Esq.
410-260-1523
RE: Senate Bill 864
Election Reform Act of 2023
DATE: February 22, 2023
(2/24)
POSITION: Oppose

The Maryland Judiciary opposes Senate Bill 864. The offered legislation removes circuit court judges from filing for partisan elections and establishes procedures under Subtitle 9, Election of Circuit Court Judges.

The Judiciary continues to strongly support the elimination of contested judicial elections for circuit court judges. This bill fails to address all the problems with contested judicial elections. The propriety of the election of judges to the circuit courts of Maryland has been vigorously debated since the 1850-51 Constitutional Convention. A primary goal has always been, to the extent possible, to separate the election of judiciary officials from influence by political organizations.

In addition, the Judiciary currently has a [Workgroup to Study Judicial Selection](#) that is conducting a thorough study of methods of election and retention for trial judges in Maryland with all pertinent stakeholders. The Judiciary respectfully requests that the legislature resist enacting any reform in the area of elections of judges until this Workgroup has been given time to issue their final and comprehensive recommendations.

cc: Hon. Cheryl Kagan
Judicial Council
Legislative Committee
Kelley O'Connor