



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 1, 2023

To: The Honorable Luke Clippinger
Chair, Judiciary Committee

From: Delegate Jen Terrasa
District 13, Howard County

Re: Sponsor Testimony in Support of HB244 Estates and Trusts – Registers of Wills – Electronic Filing and Signatures

Dear Chairman Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present HB244, which authorizes the Registers of Wills in Maryland to accept any document, except an original will, that is filed electronically. HB244 also prohibits Registers of Wills from refusing to accept a document based on the way it was signed.

The Problem:

Currently, Registers of Wills operate under an outdated requirement that all documents filed with their offices must be in paper form and with wet original signatures.

Background:

Most of the state courts have been migrating from paper filings to a new electronic filing system called MDEC (Maryland Electronic Courts). For some reason, a decision was made years ago that the Registers of Wills would not be included in this system. The Registers are working with their IT Team to move to a web-based system in the next few months and then prepare to go live with an e-filing component of that system. However, while they will be ready to go live with this system in the next 12 months, Maryland law prohibits them from accepting anything other than physical paper filings.

The Solution:

HB244 is a simple bill that just enables attorneys and lay people to file probate documents online, saving time and money.

I respectfully urge a favorable report.