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The Honorable Luke Clippinger, Chair
Judiciary Committee
House Office Building, Room 101
Annapolis, MD 21401

Support (FAV) – SB 253 – Estates and Trusts – Registers of Wills – Electronic Filing and Signatures

Dear Chair Clippinger and Committee Members:

My name is Alexis Burrell-Rohde. I am the Register of Wills for Baltimore County and testifying in favor of Senate Bill 253, which crossed over from the Senate on a unanimous vote.

Under current law, the Registers of Wills in Maryland are not allowed to accept any probate documents electronically. Every document we accept is required to have an original, wet signature. This is outdated, ineffective, wasteful and makes estate administration more difficult for our customers – both lawyers and unrepresented individuals. Most of State government, including most courts, now allow for electronic filing and signatures. The Registers are asking for the legal authority to join the growing movement away from physical paper improving access to justice and providing better service to the public. Our system would utilize a reliable, secure, cloud-based interface to make the probate process less expensive and more user-friendly through e-filing and signatures. We plan to provide 24-hour access for the public to submit documents, replace paper files with digital files, and reduce the more than 2 million pages of paper we process annually.

The e-filing system we envision is already in development and paid for under our existing IT contract. As such, this new system will incur no additional costs to the State. This bill simply allows us the authority to create the details and framework for this new system and then have them adopted into the Maryland Rules in time to get e-filing up and running in the next 12 to 18 months. We are already late to implement e-filing, and we cannot in good conscience wait any longer to implement these changes to better serve the people of Maryland.

I respectfully recommend a favorable report on Senate Bill 253 and appreciate the Committee's thoughtful attention.

Best regards,

Alexis Burrell Rohde

Register of Wills
Baltimore County