

BILL NO: HB664
TITLE: Court Personnel-Protection of Personal Information
(Judge Andrew F. Wilkinson Judicial Security Act)
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
HEARING DATE: January 31, 2024
POSITION: SUPPORT

House Bill 664 seeks to protect the safety and security of judicial officers throughout Maryland. This bill will authorize a certain protected individual or the office of Information Privacy in the Administrative Office of the Courts to request that a governmental entity or person not publish personal information of the individual on the Internet, social media, or social networks. Furthermore, the bill requires the governmental entity or person remove the information from any existing publication.

This bill is crucial in keeping judicial officers and their families safe. In the past three years there have been three targeted shootings of a state court judge. This past October, Judge Andrew F. Wilkinson was murdered in the driveway of his home. Earlier that day, Judge Wilkinson had presided over a divorce case. The facts presented to the judge involved numerous allegations of spousal assault and child abuse. After a lengthy hearing custody was awarded to the non-abusive litigant. The judge was murdered that evening by the abusive litigant who was denied custody of his children.

The Women's Law Center handles thousands of cases annually involving allegations of intimate partner violence. A large portion of our clients are seeking Orders of Protection from domestic violence. Many of the judicial officers that preside over these contentious matters have been subject to threats of violence against their safety and the safety of their families.

House Bill 664 seeks to protect the private information of judicial officers from being published on the Internet, social media, and on social networks. This is an important and necessary law to protect judicial officers and their families in the State of Maryland. The Women's Law Center requests a favorable report on House Bill 664.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a non-profit legal services organization whose mission is to ensure the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women in Maryland. Our mission is advanced through direct legal services, information and referral hotlines, and statewide advocacy.