

HB664 -Court Personnel - Protection of Personal In

Uploaded by: Catherine OMalley

Position: FAV

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 exiting 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.

HB0664 - Judge Andrew F. Wilkinson Judicial Securi

Uploaded by: Stephanie Wilkinson

Position: FAV

January 29, 2024

Good Afternoon, Chair Clippinger and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Stephanie Wilkinson. I am the surviving spouse of Judge Andrew F. Wilkinson.

I am writing to ask you to support HBO664, the Protection of Personal Information (Judge Andrew F. Wilkinson Judicial Security Act).

At a minimum, we know the man who murdered my husband began searching the internet for information on him in July 2023. If specific measures had been in place, somebody using a credible commercial solution could have prevented this with an alert to the proper authorities. Such a program does exist to help protect our judiciary and others like you. However, passing this bill is the first step.

I am devastated that I lost my husband, but my heart is beyond broken that my children have lost their father. Naturally, I do not want others to suffer a preventable work-related attack if the capability exists.

Our family is the victim of an attack on a cornerstone of our country - our judicial process. If we do not step in and offer our judiciary the protection and privacy they should have, we will surely water down the strength of the judicial system by getting less qualified candidates to fill the positions.

Judges from all over the United States, even a United States Supreme Court Justice, have reached out to me with condolences. Eyes from across the nation are on this matter. Therefore, I hope you and your committee members take the first step in raising the bar to protect our judiciary members with the support of this bill. I also trust that by doing so, my children will know that their father did not die in vain.

Thank you for your consideration and please know you may reach out to me with questions for more specific details.

Warm Regards,

Stephanie Wilkinson

Maryland Land Title Association

Uploaded by: Tommy Tompsett

Position: FAV



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To: Members of the Judiciary Committee
From: MLTA Legislative Committee
Date: January 30, 2024 [Hearing date: February 1, 2024]
Subject: **HB 664** – Court Personnel - Protection of Personal Information (Judge Andrew F. Wilkinson Judicial Security Act)
Position: **Favorable**

The Maryland Land Title Association (MLTA) is a professional organization working on behalf of title industry service providers and consumers, and is comprised of agents, abstractors, attorneys, and underwriters. MLTA **SUPPORTS** HB 664.

Through the creation of the Office of Information Privacy in the Administrative Office of the Courts, the settlement industry is provided with a mechanism to obtain shielded information that may be needed to complete the settlement on any real property purchases or other transactions in which members of the judiciary may be participants.

MLTA understands and supports all reasonable efforts to protect judges and other court personnel. We believe this legislation will strike the correct balance in these efforts. MLTA urges a favorable report on HB 664.

HB0664 - MSBA Support Letter (2024.01.29).pdf

Uploaded by: Shaoli Katana

Position: FWA



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To: Members of the House Judiciary Committee
From: Maryland State Bar Association (MSBA)
Subject: HB 664 – Court Personnel - Protection of Personal Information (Judge Andrew F. Wilkinson Judicial Security Act)
Date: January 29, 2024
Position: **Favorable with Amendment**

The Maryland State Bar Association (MSBA) supports **House Bill 664 - Court Personnel - Protection of Personal Information (Judge Andrew F. Wilkinson Judicial Security Act)**. HB 664 authorizes 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 or remove the information from any existing publication; specifies certain procedures for the protection of personal information of a protected individual; authorizes certain relief for a violation of the Act.

MSBA represents more attorneys and judges than any other organization across the state in all practice areas. Through its advocacy committees and various practice-specific sections, MSBA monitors and takes positions on legislation that protects the legal profession, preserves the integrity of the judicial system, and ensures access to justice for Marylanders.

Enhancing judicial security and preserving the rule of law is critical to MSBA and the entire legal profession. Most recently, MSBA mourns the killing of Judge Andrew F. Wilkinson, Circuit Court Judge for Washington County and longtime MSBA member. Judge Wilkinson's murder follows escalating threats and violence faced by Maryland state and federal judges, attorneys, and courthouse personnel on a routine basis.

The judiciary serves a vital function of upholding the rule of law and serving as a pillar of our democracy and freedom. We must preserve judicial integrity and independence, allowing judges to make impartial decisions without fear of violent threats and harmful physical recourse. Attacks on the judiciary can also have a chilling effect on the recruitment and retention of judges, as attorneys must weigh their calling to the highest level of professional service with their personal safety. We must offer specific protections to our judges to preserve the justice system they represent.

The remedies outlined in HB 664 are carefully drawn to protect the judiciary while balancing the public's right to information and legitimate business needs. The bill would protect the safety of judges and their families through a practical, straightforward approach to enhance judicial safety. The bill is not overly

burdensome, as it limits “personal information” to categories included in recently-enacted federal legislation and similar bills in other states to protect this population. The bill provides a reasonable process and response time to request and remove the information of “protected individuals” and offers appropriate relief, damages, and criminal penalties for violations of the Act. The Office of Information Privacy within the Administrative Office of the Courts, with the authority to shield judicial addresses and to request and respond to personal information requests, will be instrumental in appropriately supporting the needs of the judiciary in implementing this bill.

Judicial security cannot be resolved through the passage of one bill alone. Broad-based efforts to assess both immediate and long-term security needs, including courthouse construction and modernization projects and security recruitment and training programs, must be pursued through the proposed task force. MSBA strongly endorses the establishment of the Task Force to Ensure the Safety of Judicial Facilities and respectfully suggests that “*a representative of the Maryland State Bar Association, designated by the President of the Association,*” be appointed and included. With membership of thousands of practitioners and judges from across the state, MSBA can provide valuable expertise and firsthand accounts of security deficiencies and needs of courthouses in various Maryland jurisdictions.

Every judicial officer in the state must be able to decide cases without fear for their safety or for their family.

For these reasons, MSBA strongly supports HB 664 and urges a **favorable report with the proposed amendment**.

Contact: Shaoli Katana, Advocacy Director (shaoli@msba.org, 410-387-5606)