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Maryland House Judiciary Committee

Maryland General Assembly, Annapolis, MD 21401

Testimony in Strong Support of HB1420 – Registers of Wills: Identity Verification Without Government-Issued Identification

Hearing Date: March 26th, 2025

Chairperson and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

My name is Maureen Wambui, and I am a community advocate and resident of Legislative District 8 in Maryland. I am writing in **strong support of HB1420** as an immigrant who understands firsthand the challenges of navigating legal and financial systems without traditional government-issued identification. This bill is a crucial step toward ensuring that all Maryland residents, regardless of their background or documentation status, have fair and equitable access to the probate process.

As an immigrant, I have witnessed the barriers that arise when trying to prove one's identity in legal matters. Many immigrants, including elderly individuals and those fleeing difficult circumstances, may not have immediate access to government-issued identification due to delays, financial constraints, or legal complexities. This issue becomes especially urgent when trying to claim rightful inheritance or handle estate matters after the passing of a loved one.

HB1420 addresses this gap by requiring the Registers of Wills to establish alternative methods for identity verification. This legislation ensures that individuals without traditional forms of ID are not unjustly excluded from the probate process and are able to rightfully access their inheritance and estate benefits. It is a common-sense, fair, and compassionate measure that upholds the principles of due process and equity.

Moreover, this bill strengthens trust between immigrant communities and government institutions. When individuals know they have legal avenues to verify their identity and protect their rights, they are more likely to engage with public services rather than live in fear of systemic exclusion.

I urge this committee to support HB1420 and remove the unnecessary burdens that prevent vulnerable populations from accessing what is rightfully theirs. Maryland has always been a leader in advancing inclusive policies, and passing this bill would further demonstrate the state's commitment to justice and fairness for all its residents.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Wambui.