



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Sponsor Testimony

SB 74: Judges – Mandatory Retirement Age

Good afternoon, Chairman Smith, Vice Chair and members of Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee. Senate Bill 74 would change the mandatory judicial retirement age in Maryland from 70 to 75.

Maryland's current retirement age for judges was established decades ago, reflecting a different era's understanding of aging and workforce dynamics. Today, this limit is not only outdated but also detrimental to the judiciary and to the citizens it serves.

Modern advancements in healthcare, nutrition, and overall quality of life mean that people are living longer, healthier, and more productive lives. The average life expectancy in the United States has increased significantly since the 20th century, and many individuals in their 70s are fully capable of performing demanding roles, including those in the judiciary.

For judges, whose work relies heavily on intellectual acumen, experience, and wisdom, the capacity to serve effectively often extends well beyond the age of 70. Many esteemed judges report that their late careers are their most productive and insightful periods, enriched by years of legal experience.

Maryland's current mandatory retirement age of 70 is one of the most restrictive in the nation. Many states have recognized the outdated nature of this limit and have already extended their mandatory retirement ages beyond 70, or abolished them altogether. Here are a few examples:

- **South Dakota:** Mandatory retirement age is 80.
- **Utah:** Mandatory retirement age is 75.
- **Wyoming:** Judges serve until 75.
- **Indiana, Vermont, and Rhode Island:** No mandatory retirement age at all.

These states recognize that forcing experienced, capable judges to step down at 70 deprives the judiciary of valuable institutional knowledge and expertise. Maryland risks falling behind this trend.

Mandatory retirement at 70 unnecessarily removes judges at the height of their careers. Judges bring decades of experience to the bench, and the loss of this expertise can disrupt judicial processes and diminish the quality of decisions. Extending the age to 75 would allow Maryland to retain these seasoned professionals, ensuring continuity and stability in our courts.

Furthermore, in nearly every profession, individuals are working longer. Employers increasingly recognize the value of experienced professionals and are adapting retirement policies to reflect this shift. Judges, with their unique skill set and lifetime of legal knowledge, are no exception.

Raising the retirement age to 75 would align Maryland's judiciary with the realities of modern professional life and workforce participation, ensuring our state benefits from the full potential of its judges.

In closing, I respectfully urge a FAVORABLE report for SB 74 to support extending Maryland's mandatory retirement age for judges to 75.