

SB1029 Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wills - Evidence of Intent (Granny's Law)

Jennifer Johnson

Address: Shielded for privacy reasons Email address: jenniferelsiejohnson@hotmail.com

Phone number: 410-241-4331

Support FAV

March 7, 2025

Dear Judicial Proceedings Chair Senator Simth, Vice Chair Senator Waldstreicher and Committee Members,

Request Your Support:

My name is Jennifer Johnson and I ask for your full committee's favorable support for "Granny's Law" SB1029 Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wills - Evidence of Intent.

What happened to me was a direct violation of my grandmother's written will and of my human rights.

No Fiscal Note:

I can tell from the fiscal note that similar legislation was introduced in prior years. I urge you to please break this negative cycle and make positive change in Maryland and pass SB1029, which has a zero-dollar impact on the state's budget.

SB1029 Granny's Law will CORRECT the following:

- Historical Wrongs of Health-related Charities not supporting Maryland State Policy of working to eradicate Health Disparities
- Historical wrongs of the Orphans Courts ignoring people's wills and essentially allowing lawyers to make large profits off of deceased people's estates.
- Historical wrongs of the Orphans court overriding the descendant's family's and trusted personal representatives
- Historical wrongs imposed on Caregivers. Caregivers are most often times the Power of Attorney and then the Personal Representative. Caregiver's rights and respect are often times ignored. This bill seeks to give the power and authority back to the person who has done most if not all of the work to help the decedent in life and in death.
- This bill will help honor my Granny (Jennifer Johnson) and anyone else's loved one whose will and/ or estate was or unfortunately is currently being grossly misinterpreted by the orphan courts in Maryland.

Why Case Law Can be very problematic and cause harm to women and minorities:

Opponents will reference case law; I think it is important to understand that many times case law was developed during periods in time where women and various ethnic minorities especially African Americans were not even viewed as humans but rather property. This is extremely problematic and hence not something to follow. Pass this legislation and make some positive new case law.

Horrible Situation, no one else should go through:

I have never been through anything so horrific in my entire life and Granny's Law seeks to make sure, this never happens to anyone else in our state ever again. To give you a very brief synopsis, my grandmother was leaving a large charitable donation to 4 major health related charities with the goal of positively impacting African American lives as we are disproportionately affected by health disparities. While all of these organizations document that African Americans are disproportionately affected by all of these disease states, instead of allowing me to be what I am God ordained to be, my grandmother's Personal Representative, a Baltimore county judge thought she knew better than me, knew better than my grandmother and forced me into jail when my best friend was dying of cancer and allowed 2 attorneys she preferred to bill a beyond excessive amount of money for work I completed. The judge's order forced me to give all of my grandmother's information and all the work I completed to bring the estate almost to a close to these lawyers or I could not get out of the jail.

Judge Juliet Fisher of Baltimore County orphan's court judge allowed these 2 attorneys to bill almost double the annual salary for Senate and Delegate members for Maryland General Assembly against my grandmother's estate for work I completed. Something that would have cost me around \$3,000 max and a matter of weeks to complete had the courts never gotten involved. Wound up costing my grandmother's legacy and did the exact opposite of what my grandmother wanted, which was to help African Americans who are already suffering. It cost me years of my life as it is taking me time to recover. It broke my mother's heart and caused her unnecessary stress and per the instructions in my grandmother's will I may or may not have hired an attorney to complete the administration of her will, because the will was very simple and straightforward if followed.

Instead, the 2 Court assigned lawyers billed my grandmother's estate at a rate of \$395 an hour per attorney. My first attorney gave me all of my fees back as I had done all of the work to bring it almost to a close that was around \$25,000, that firm is recognized as one of the best in the industry. This was before the courts decided to do the damage and destruction they did and the court assigned attorneys billed almost 4 times as much as my first attorney and did the exact opposite of anything I or my grandmother would have ever wanted and in the end threatened to do even more damage if I did not stop questioning or verbally protesting what they were doing. One should also note that there is a clause in my grandmother's will that is in most wills that the court forcibly ignored. The clause in question if not ignored by the courts would not have allowed the judge or her assigned attorneys to do any of these things she did to me or to my grandmother's estate. The clause is also common language in many, if not most people's wills. That clause is included in the House and Senate bill. Additionally, I had 8 expert witnesses testify to the health disparities I and my family and friends as African Americans face the judges did not care. My attorney fees were around \$7,000 for me to get arrested and for an appeal and yet the court appointed attorneys did nothing but billed almost \$100,000 against my grandmother's estate. Again, nothing my grandmother, I or my family would have ever wanted.

The will works if you work it:

A few examples I will give, nothing works until you work it. If you have ever been on a diet but didn't stick to it... I am sure you likely didn't drop many pounds because you choose pizza, candy and ice cream over water and fruits and lots of veggies and lean protein. Ones will is very similar if you follow the will, it works if you use the courts and override people's wills and do things never stated in the will you do not get the decedents desired results you get for lack of a better word and putting it mildly a "hot mess". Nowhere in my grandmothers will does it say she wants her information or money in the hands of strangers or for me to have to go to jail, yet sadly these were the outcomes because her will was not followed. Just a few examples of things that should never have happened the court appointed attorney's instead of using my grandmother's trusted CPA of over 31 years who had started the taxes already, used a firm 10 times more expensive, something my grandmother would absolutely never have wanted. The judges ruling also missed a very basic concept of charities are to give to the needy. Who is most needy as it relates to health disparities, African Americans my grandmother's intended audience as she was African American and we are already suffering disproportionately.

Please Support this Legislation and bring Honor where there is currently disgrace:

I hope that you will see the disproportionate needs faced by African Americans in many areas of disease but specifically in the area of cancer, cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer's and mental illness and understand that the correct thing to do and way to help is to give your committees full favorable support for this legislation and help honor all groups suffering from health disparities, help honor all caregivers many of whom die while taking care of others and help honor my Granny. Thanks for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Elsie Johnson

Founder Friends of St. Peter's Cemetery

In loving memory of my Granny

& in Honor of all of our family and friends who have lost their battles to various health disparities

Articles for your review on Caregivers, Health Disparities and Law

Caregiver Burnout

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9225-caregiver-burnout>

Why It's Critical to Develop a Backup Family Caregiving Plan

<https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/basics/info-2024/backup-care-plan.html>

Baltimore group provides lifeline for Black women who are caregivers

<https://www.cbsnews.com/baltimore/news/baltimore-binti-black-caregivers-daughters-parents/>

NAACP Calls for Cancer to Be Declared A Public Health Crisis In The Black Community

<https://www.blackenterprise.com/naACP-cancer-declared-public-health-crisis-black-community/>

How Racism Leads to Cancer Health Disparities

<https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/health-equity/racism-health-disparities.html>

How History Has Shaped Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities

<https://www.kff.org/how-history-has-shaped-racial-and-ethnic-health-disparities-a-timeline-of-policies-and-events/?entry=1808-to-1890-medical-exploitation-of-enslaved-black-women>

Health Equity: Overview, History, and Key Concepts | Springer Publishing

<https://connect.springerpub.com/content/book/978-0-8261-7724-7/part/part01/chapter/ch01>

174 Bills Signed into Law, Including Stacey's Law and Others to Honor Marylanders (2019)

<https://marylandmatters.org/2019/04/30/174-bills-signed-into-law-including-staceys-law-and-others-to-honor-marylanders/>

Law school project finds slavery citations still being used today

[Law school project finds slavery citations still being used today | AP News](#)