

**TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM T. WOOD, 31 WOOD LANE., ROCKVILLE, MD 20850 IN
SUPPORT OF HB778 & SB630:**

- GOOD AFTERNOON!
- MY NAME IS BILL WOOD.
- I AM HERE TO STRONGLY SUPPORT HB778 AND SB630.
- I HAVE BEEN A MEMBER OF THE BAR SINCE 1967 AND AN ACTIVE TRIAL LAWYER FOR FIFTY-TWO YEARS UNTIL MY SEMI-RETIREMENT LAST YEAR.
- MANY YEARS AGO, I SERVED AS TREASURER FOR A SLATE OF SIX MONTGOMERY COUNTY SITTING JUDGES RUNNING IN A FIERCELY CONTESTED ELECTION.
- WE MET IN MY OFFICE IN ROCKVILLE EVERY WEDNESDAY TO DISCUSS ISSUES, INCLUDING HOW TO ETHICALLY RUN AN ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND RAISE MONEY INCLUDING FROM LAWYERS PRACTICING BEFORE THE COURT.
- WE WERE CONSTANTLY FACED WITH ETHICAL CONCERNS.
- WE ENGAGED INDEPENDENT COUNSEL.
- WE RAISED APPROXIMATELY \$680,000 TO SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN PRIMARILY FROM LAWYERS.
- THE JUDGES WON OVERWHELMINGLY IN ALL THESE RACES BUT CONTESTED JUDICIAL ELECTIONS ARE FRAUGHT WITH PROBLEMS.
- FOR EXAMPLE, AT THE OUTSET WE ISOLATED THE JUDGES FROM THE NAMES OF ALL CONTRIBUTORS, BUT THE APPEARANCE WAS NOT GOOD.

- AND WE ONLY HAVE TO LOOK AT THE TRAGIC FATAL SHOOTING ON OCTOBER 19, 2023 OF JUDGE WILKINSON IN HAGERSTOWN IN THE DRIVEWAY OF HIS HOME BY AN ANGRY LITIGANT AND THE REMOVAL BY THE MD. SUPREME COURT ON AUGUST 15, 2024 OF A PRINCE GEORGES COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE FOR MULTIPLE INSTANCES OF ALLEGED MISCONDUCT AFTER THIS JUDGE UNSEATED A SITTING JUDGE IN NOVEMBER, 2020.
- I NOW BELIEVE STRONGLY THAT THE TIME HAS COME TO ELIMINATE CONTESTED JUDICIAL ELECTIONS IN FAVOR OF RETENTION ELECTIONS.
- I DID NOT ALWAYS FEEL THIS WAY BUT TIMES HAVE DRAMATICALLY CHANGED.
- JUDGES MAKE DECISIONS AND THERE ARE WINNERS AND LOSERS.
- THERE IS SECURITY IN THE COURTHOUSES BUT VERY LITTLE OUTSIDE THE COURTHOUSES WHERE JUDGES CAN BE FOUND CAMPAIGNING.
- I WILL SIMPLY SAY THAT BASED UPON MY FIFTY-TWO YEARS AS A TRIAL LAWYER AND MY EXPERIENCE WORKING IN CONTESTED ELECTIONS, THE EXHAUSTIVE VETTING EACH JUDICIAL CANDIDATE CURRENTLY GOES THROUGH PRIOR TO APPOINTMENT INSURES A **HIGHLY QUALIFIED** JUDICIARY.
- REQUIRING SITTING JUDGES TO CAMPAIGN IN THE PUBLIC ARENA IN TODAY'S ENVIRONMENT AND TO RAISE MONEY, PARTICULARLY FROM LAWYERS WHO APPEAR BEFORE THEM, IS, IN MY OPINION, NO LONGER A BEST PRACTICE TO MAINTAIN A HIGHLY QUALIFIED, FAIR AND IMPARTIAL JUDICIARY.
- THANK YOU!