

Janelle Ryan-Colbert
President

Prince George's County Bar Association
14330 Old Marlboro Pike
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

Testimony of Janelle Ryan-Colbert, President PGCBA
House Judiciary Committee
HB 778 – Favorable
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Good Afternoon Chair Clippinger and Vice Chair Bartlett,

My name is Janelle Ryan-Colbert, and I am the President of the Prince George's County Bar Association. I am submitting this letter to express our strong support for House Bill 0778 and Senate Bill 0630, which propose amendments to the Maryland Constitution regarding the selection and retention of circuit court judges.

The Prince George's County Bar Association has long maintained a committee with the sole purpose of interviewing candidates for circuit court positions. This vetting process is thorough, fair, and ensures that the Governor can select from a pool of candidates who are not only technically qualified but also possess the highest levels of character and integrity necessary to preside over the lives of the citizens of Prince George's County.

Additionally, we believe that eliminating judicial elections will protect qualified judges from being unseated by individuals who may not be adequately vetted or who may be less qualified. Such individuals could potentially replace judges who have been deemed qualified by their peers through various judicial committees tasked with this important responsibility.

Finally, we believe this bill will enhance the safety of judges serving in this state. We have seen the disastrous consequences when judges are personally targeted by disgruntled litigants. Judges who serve this state deserve protection, and we believe this legislation will improve their safety by reducing the risks associated with contested elections.

The Prince George's County Bar Association believes that the passage of this legislation is a vital step toward creating a more efficient and just process. It will enable the Governor to appoint highly qualified circuit court judges in Maryland, promote safety, and ensuring excellence in our judiciary.

Thank you.