

HON. STACY A. MAYER  
CIRCUIT COURT  
JUDGE  
BALTIMORE COUNTY  
CHAIR

HON. RICHARD SANDY  
CIRCUIT COURT  
JUDGE  
FREDERICK COUNTY  
VICE-CHAIR



KELLEY O'CONNOR  
ASSISTANT STATE COURT  
ADMINISTRATOR  
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS  
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## MARYLAND JUDICIAL COUNCIL LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** House Ways and Means Committee  
**FROM:** Legislative Committee  
Suzanne D. Pelz, Esq.  
410-260-1523  
**RE:** House Bill 1044  
Maryland Voting Rights Act of 2025 – Preclearance and Voter  
Intimidation and Obstruction  
**DATE:** February 13, 2025  
(2/24)  
**POSITION:** Oppose, only as to the provisions noted below

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The Maryland Judiciary opposes House Bill 1044 only as to the provisions noted below. The Court takes no position on the other provisions within the bill or on the policy aims therein.

This bill creates a framework requiring covered jurisdictions to submit covered policies for preclearance by the Office of the Attorney General (OAG). As an alternative to OAG preclearance, under new Section 15.5-205, the bill would allow a covered jurisdiction to submit a covered policy to the “Court,” which is defined at the beginning of the bill as the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County. The court would have a limited amount of time to grant or deny preclearance (60 days). The bill states that the denial of preclearance under this section “may be appealed only by the covered jurisdiction in accordance with the ordinary rules of appellate procedure.” The Judiciary has due process concerns with the court being able to grant or deny preclearance before those affected may even be aware of such an action. Further, as worded in the bill, it is not necessarily clear where it is intended for appeals to be filed under new Section 15.5-207. The wording used refers to “the Court” twice – first in the context of the reviewing court and second in the context of the court which made the original decision. This could be read to mean the Circuit

Court for Anne Arundel County in both instances. It is also possible this is intended to be an appeal to the Appellate Court of Maryland.

cc. Hon. Stephanie Smith  
Judicial Council  
Legislative Committee  
Kelley O'Connor