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CIRCUIT COURT
JUDGE
BALTIMORE COUNTY
CHAIR

HON. RICHARD SANDY
CIRCUIT COURT
JUDGE
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VICE-CHAIR



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MARYLAND JUDICIAL COUNCIL LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
FROM: Legislative Committee
Suzanne D. Pelz, Esq.
410-260-1523
RE: Senate Bill 168
State Department of Assessments and Taxation – Blockchain-
Based Real Property Title Pilot Program - Establishment
DATE: January 16, 2025
(1/21)
POSITION: Oppose absent further study

The Maryland Judiciary opposes Senate Bill 168, at this time, absent further study. This legislation establishes a pilot program in a developing area for which there are still many unknowns. As such, it is difficult to ascertain the viability, security, and cost associated of such a program without additional study.

Land Records instruments throughout the State are stored in and administered by the Clerk of Court in each of Maryland's twenty-four (24) Circuit Courts. Maryland's land records system is not merely administrative, it is codified in the constitutional and statutory framework of state law. Under Article IV of the Maryland Constitution and Title 3 of the Real Property Article, Clerks of the Circuit Court are expressly charged with the custody, recording, indexing, and certification of land record instruments. This structure reflects a deliberate allocation of authority to constitutional officers who are locally accountable, judicially supervised, and legally trained in record integrity. This legislation will, at least in pilot jurisdictions, transfer those duties and custodianship of Land Record instruments from the Clerks to SDAT.

The legislation will also require the Judiciary to develop and maintain a programming interface with SDAT to validate digital titles. Preliminary estimates put the cost of establishing the interface at \$148,000, without knowing the design, process changes, and other variables. The actual cost could well exceed that estimate. It is also unclear if the Judiciary could procure a vendor and have its system fully operational by January 1, 2027.

cc. Hon. Ron Watson
Judicial Council
Legislative Committee
Kelley O'Connor