

SB 80 - State Ethics Commission Departmental - Sup

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February 11, 2026

**Senate Bill 80 – Maryland Public Ethics Law – Financial Disclosure Statements - State
Officials of and Candidates to be State Officials of the Judicial Branch**

Testimony Before the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

The State Ethics Commission provides testimony in support of Senate Bill 80. This is the State Ethics Commission's one departmental proposal this year. This legislation preserves transparency while also increasing government efficiency and security for financial disclosure filers by ensuring the most direct notification process for judicial officials and candidates for judicial office. This legislation eliminates an administrative burden for both the Administrative Office of the Courts and the State Ethics Commission. This legislation does not have any fiscal impact for either State agency.

This bill clarifies that the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) administers the financial disclosure provisions and public records inspection provisions of the Public Ethics Law for judicial officials and candidates to be judicial officials. State officials of the Judicial Branch file financial disclosure forms electronically through a system maintained and administered by the Judiciary. The State Ethics Commission does not have access to that filing system at all and has no authority over judicial officials.

Currently, the Public Ethics Law requires AOC to forward copies of all financial disclosure statements that judicial officials file on their system to the State Ethics Commission. The proposed legislation seeks to have this requirement removed from the law. When AOC sends copies of the judicial officials' statements to the Commission's office, they are sent as PDF files and stored on our computer system. The State Ethics Commission has received two requests to inspect a judicial official's financial disclosure statement since 2019 according to our inspection records. It is duplicative to have the records at two agencies. The State Ethics Commission does not have the same ability to directly notify a judicial official of a public inspection of their financial disclosure statement. The Judiciary is in the best position to establish both procedures for public inspection of these financial disclosure statements and provide prompt notification to State officials and candidates of the Judicial Branch if their forms are reviewed.

This proposed legislation is good for government efficiency, prompt notification of inspection of records to the filer, and has no fiscal impact on any agency. The Commission thanks the Committee for its consideration of this departmental legislation and seeks a favorable report.

SB0080 – MSBA Support Letter (2026.02.09 - Public

Uploaded by: Shaoli Sarkar

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Bill: SB 80 - Maryland Public Ethics Law - Financial Disclosure Statements - State Officials of and Candidates to be a State Official of the Judicial Branch

Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment

Position: Favorable

Date: February 9, 2026

The Maryland State Bar Association (MSBA) **supports** Senate Bill 80 - Maryland Public Ethics Law - Financial Disclosure Statements - State Officials of and Candidates to be a State Official of the Judicial Branch. Through its advocacy committees and various practice-specific sections, MSBA monitors and takes positions on legislation that protects the legal profession, preserves the integrity of the judicial system, and ensures access to justice for Marylanders.

MSBA supports this legislation that shifts responsibility for maintaining and implementing financial disclosures to the Judiciary for judicial candidates and judges. This proposed change supports recently-enacted legislation that strengthens judicial security and protects personal information, as financial statements often contain sensitive information that could be used to threaten or harass judicial officers. MSBA supports SB 80's specific inclusion of judicial candidates' information, as these individuals should receive the same security protections as sitting judges, given their public presence and visibility throughout the nomination and election process. The bill balances the right to transparency and public access to information while ensuring administrative overview and a more streamlined approach to these documents directly through the Administrative Office of the Courts.

MSBA supports SB 80 and requests a favorable report.

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