

Testimony in Support of House Bill 963

HB963 Registers of Wills - Appointment of Personal Representatives

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

March 25, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee,

We Are CASA offers favorable testimony in support of **HB963– Registers of Wills - Appointment of Personal Representatives.**

We Are CASA is a national organization building power and improving the quality of life in the working-class: Black, Latino/a/e, Afro-descendent, Indigenous, and Immigrant communities. With a membership of over 173,000 members, CASA creates change with its power-building model blending human services, community organizing, and advocacy to serve the full spectrum of the needs, dreams, and aspirations of members. For nearly forty years, CASA has employed grassroots community organizing to bring our communities closer together and fight for justice, while simultaneously providing vital services to communities across the state and beyond.

The collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge was a devastating tragedy that has deeply impacted all of Maryland, in particular the families of the six construction workers who perished in the collapse. One of those families is the family of Miguel Luna, a husband and father of three, who left for work on the bridge but never returned home. Since then, CASA has been assisting Mrs. Castellon Quintana, Miguel Luna's widow, and her family. However, we have encountered significant challenges in the probate process because Mrs. Castellon Quintana does not meet the current narrow requirements of the existing Code.

HB 963 is a bill that seeks to provide justice and closure to Miguel Luna's family during the estate process by ensuring that widows or any eligible surviving family member—regardless of citizenship or immigration status, as long as they are a Maryland resident,—can petition for the administration of their loved one's estate. This simple yet critical change will have an immense impact on this Maryland family.

We Are CASA strongly urges the committee to issue a favorable report on HB963.

Please see below the testimony Ms. Castellon Quintana provided the House Judiciary Committee in support of this measure in 2025 (HB1420).

My name is María del Carmen Castellón Quintana, and I am the widow of Miguel Luna, who passed away 11 months ago, on March 26, 2024, when the Key Bridge in Baltimore collapsed that day. My husband and I were a very happy couple and shared so much together—our dreams and hopes for a long and happy life, as well as our daily expenses and bank accounts. He supported me in achieving my dream of starting my own business, and together we saved enough to buy our first home in 2022. I contributed to the down payment with my own savings, as did he, and together we accomplished the dream of owning a home.

Unfortunately, nearly a year ago, I suffered what I would not wish upon anyone—the tragic loss of the most important person in my life.

As I began to rebuild my life after the tragedy and organize our shared finances—which was already complicated due to the absence of a will from Miguel—I was informed of two immensely unjust and frustrating situations that I had to face in the midst of my grief, which I still experience today.

First, since my name did not officially appear on the title of the home we purchased together, I learned that the property would be considered part of my late husband's estate. Second, because I am not a U.S. citizen, I was not eligible to be designated as the representative of his estate or to have any direct role in decisions regarding the distribution of its assets. This, despite the fact that the estate consists almost entirely of the home that I myself purchased with my husband using our savings!

This injustice is something that can easily be remedied with the simple power that this legislative body holds in declaring that any person, regardless of their immigration status, can serve as the personal representative of a loved one's estate. This would ensure that the distribution of those assets takes place in accordance with the deceased's wishes.

With your support and action, I hope that no one else will have to suffer the double burden of losing a partner and then being denied a voice in the distribution of shared assets solely because of the survivor's immigration status.

Thank you for your attention, and I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 1420.