

SB0355 Family Law - Marriage License Applications - Appearance in Court
Judicial Proceedings – February 10, 2026
Sponsor: Senator Justin Ready
Position: Favorable with Amendments

Testimony of Scott Poyer, Clerk of the Circuit Court, Anne Arundel County

Thank you, Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the committee, for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 355. For the record, my name is Scott Poyer, Clerk of the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County. I am also testifying on behalf of the Maryland Circuit Court Clerks' Association, which represents the twenty-four elected Clerks of the Circuit Court in Maryland.

The Clerks of the Circuit Court support SB 355 because the Clerks are responsible for issuing marriage licenses in Maryland, and we need additional tools to fight marriage fraud. As my colleague Clerk DeWees testified, marriage fraud is an ongoing problem in Maryland, which this bill would help address by establishing an additional barrier to anyone who tries to obtain a marriage license without the other party's knowledge or agreement.

One issue we have discussed among the clerks, and with other organizations, is whether the proposed requirement that both parties appear in the clerk's office sets too high a bar for marriage applicants. To address this concern, we have worked with the sponsors on amendments to the bill to allow waivers for deployed military members; incarcerated individuals; hospitalized individuals; and other exemptions for good cause. We believe this will allow for situations where one of the marriage license applicants cannot legitimately appear in the clerk's office, yet still be a significant improvement over the current requirement that only one applicant ever needs to be seen.

The Clerks ask for a favorable report on SB 355, and I would like to thank Senator Ready for sponsoring this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to comment, and I am available if you have any questions.