

HB0946
FAV
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Chair, Vice Chair and Esteemed Members of the Committee:

As the immediate Past-President of the LGBTQ Bar Association of Maryland, I write in strong support of HB946.

This legislation is simple, modest, and necessary. It does not dictate outcomes. It does not mandate quotas. It does not interfere with the Governor's constitutional appointment power. It simply requires transparency — transparency about who applies, who is recommended, and who is ultimately nominated to serve as a judge, disaggregated by office and by historically marginalized status.

If we are serious about diversity, equity, and public confidence in the judiciary, then we must be serious about data.

In recent years, we have seen a renewed push to eliminate contested judicial elections and move to retention elections only. I have opposed that effort. Voters should not lose their voice without compelling justification. And if the argument for eliminating elections is that appointments will produce a more diverse judiciary, then that claim must be measurable, not rhetorical.

As you may recall, the Workgroup to Study Judicial Selection issued a report that, in my view, moved the goalposts. It emphasized that the judiciary appears diverse when viewed statewide in the aggregate. But diversity is not a statewide abstraction. It matters where judges serve. It matters which circuits and counties see inclusive representation — and which do not.

Diverse appointments cannot occur only where they are considered politically safe. And diversity cannot be defined narrowly. If we are going to measure it, we must measure it comprehensively — including ethnicity, gender identity, disability status, veteran status, and sexual orientation.

Transparency protects everyone: applicants, commissioners, the Governor, and the public. If the process is working, the data will show it. If there are gaps, the data will help us address them honestly.

This bill strengthens confidence in the judiciary without undermining its independence. For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report.

Thank you.