

HB0375_FAV_Amir Coates.pdf

Uploaded by: Amir Coates

Position: FAV

HB0375 Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wills - Evidence of Intent
(Granny's Law)

Support FAV

Yvette Lankford

Address: 301 North Payson Street Apt. 2 Baltimore Maryland 21223

Email: yvettelankford2@gmail.com

Phone: 410 831 4953

February 2, 2026

Dear Chair, Vice Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Amir Coates and I am 9 years old. I lost my mom, Patrice Lankford, unexpectedly on May 22 of 2024 and my life will never be the same. My mom worked as a manager with Care First BlueCross and BlueShield and was friends with my Aunt Jennifer for almost 30 years. I am super grateful for my Grandma, Granddad, Aunt Cheryl, Aunt Jennifer, Ms. Sandy, Dr. Folks and all my teachers and mentors, my village. I will always miss my mom. She passed from colon cancer. My life is forever changed.

Don't think because I am a child I don't see what's going on in this country, I do and my friends do, this mess affects us all. It is your job as grownups to make things better for children like me, so do your jobs. Make things better. Correct the mess so when I grow up things are better not worse.

I didn't know because they tried to keep it from me, how horrible the courts treated my Aunt Jennifer and all that she walked through. It was wrong. I remember being little and being with mom and visiting Aunt Jennifer's Granny. I also have vivid memories of visiting my Aunt Elsie with my Mom. Aunt Elsie lived to be 100.

Hurting elders is wrong, intentional hurting people is wrong. Now I urge you to do the right thing and honor my mom and my Aunt Jennifer's Granny and everyone else's loved ones who have passed on to glory and pass HB0375 Granny's Law. Isaiah 11:6 New King James version says And a little child shall lead them.

Thank you.

Late testimony

Uploaded by: Amy L Hayes

Position: FAV

HB0375 Estate and Trusts -Interpretation of Wills

Evidence of Intent (Granny's Law)

Support FAV

Sponsor Delegate Stinnett

Pastor Amy L. Hayes, M.Div.

P.O. Box 2442

Waldorf MD 20604

awnjministry@yahoo.com

XXX-XXX-3148

January 16, 2026

Granny's Law Written Testimony

All Concerned, I am Pastor Amy L. Hayes, M.Div. and I come before you today as I speak in favorable support for "Granny's Law". I have joined my voice with Jennifer Johnson as we fight for change. While she personally was impacted by the change we seek today; she picked up her suit of armor to fight for you and I, so that we never have to endure what she did after losing her beloved grandmother. The fire she has within she got it honest as her grandmother's protégé. Ms. Johnson learned early on while witnessing her prime example, that we all must protect those we love. Yes, even after death, we must protect the ones we loved and ensure that their intentions survives their demise and what better way than for those who knew what the deceased desired after death to be their advocate because they knew what they're intentions were during life!

We must collectively seek out improvements to antiquated laws that can provide relief for those persons who has a vested interest wherein said laws affect their day to day lives verses continuing to give way to those that presents an inherent contradiction of gaining and/or benefitting from another's grief of loss. We must revise and continually review the factors which deprives society of their essential well-being. On last year those that came against this needed change in legislation were; the register of Wills, the Maryland Judiciary and the Maryland Bar Association, so that their interests could be placed in front of the family. Yet there were twenty-eight (28) persons that were in favor of the bill, and now that number has risen favorably. According to these facts alone, it is my humble opinion that the bill should have already passed. Who does these oppressors wish to serve? Themselves or the people? When we as a people can identify where current laws actually harm people they need to be reformed and Granny's Law does just that.

As a Pastor, I have personally witnessed the disadvantages, suffering and hurt that families attempt to navigate after death has had its say! On today you will hear several testimonies as to why this change in legislation is so desperately needed. I impress upon each of you to place your legal minds to effectually hear this passionate testimony. The unfortunate fact is that there are underage victims that not only have to endure the loss of their parent/guardian with the sudden

loss; but has to do so with more years in front of them and needs their future secured. They need those such as yourselves in position, to join in tandem with them verses allowing probate laws, the greed of another or those whom does not have such a vested interest to reap any further benefits from their pain and grief. I pray that all testimony in favor of Granny's Law, impacts your heart to desire you to do better for society as well as engage your minds to intellectually address the laws governing the probate practices here in Maryland.

The laws, Constitution and Legislations are living things. They expand and contrast as they affect our lives. We must constantly scrutinize these as we consider: "can anything be moral if they negatively impact the least of these amongst us?" How do we as voters and the law makers sleep at night if we do not ensure the rights of all man are not only created equal, but are also protected equally? Those that have opposed this action that would correct such an egregious monetary deficit; are those that only seek to uphold historical systematic wrong doings that echos oppressions from the past. Granny's Law is a vital piece of legislation which will allow personal representatives to use outside evidence to clarify a will's intention. It assists with calling into question beneficiaries as well as hold said beneficiaries accountable for fund usage. It mandates that there is an added layer of estate planning wherein vulnerable victims can be assured their rights are protected and their livelihood is considered at every interval. This law prevents the courts from robbing these victims legally after suffering from death. There is a disproportionate standing within the communities here in Maryland, let us come together to seek remedies to correct this. I am asking each of you to join with us and start today protecting these families. There should not be a legal act which protects those that profits against a families legacy. The outcome of the Will is pre-determined and its purpose are aligned with the originators desires. The expense of a corrupt system should no longer exist. Let us prove to all Marylander's we have their best interest at heart and we will stand with them on the battlefield for change. I am asking that today be the day that you send a clear message taking the power out of the greedy hands of lawyers or entities that oppose beneficiaries in such a manner that is discussed here today and within the proposal of the changed legislation which Granny's Law brings and give power to the people as you give the final voice of the Will's intention for the loved ones of the deceased. Thank you.

Pastor Amy L. Hayes, M.Div.

Late testimony

Uploaded by: Burgess Owens

Position: FAV

BURGESS OWENS
4TH DISTRICT OF UTAH



EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE
COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
HIGHER EDUCATION AND
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
CHAIRMAN

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

**From the Desk of Congressman Burgess Owens
Utah's Fourth Congressional District**

February 2, 2026

Re: HBO375 Granny's Law

Dear Members of the Maryland General Assembly

I am writing to express my enthusiastic and unwavering support for "Granny's Bill," a vital and urgent reform that enacts the necessary guardrails to ensure Maryland's elders are respected, their voices heard, and their legacies protected. As a firm believer in our nation's founding principles, I hold that the rights and dignity of the elderly are secured by the U.S. Constitution. It is the solemn duty of our Probate Courts to fiercely protect these rights, ensuring that the final wishes of our citizens are honored rather than dismissed.

My family's experience in the Harris County, Texas probate court mirrors the very injustices Granny's Bill seeks to remedy. My aunt left a clear and explicit will naming her daughter—my cousin—and her grandson as the executors of her estate. Despite her wishes, the presiding judge signaled his intention to disregard her instructions and turn the estate over to State administration. When no lawyer would take on the challenge of confronting a sitting judge, my cousin, Dr. Sheila Owens-Collins, courageously represented herself pro se. She filed a lawsuit against the judge and followed it with a motion for his recusal. Thankfully, this story has a just resolution: the judge voluntarily recused himself, and a new judge restored the estate to the hands of those my aunt trusted most. Dr. Owens-Collins chronicled her journey in her book, *Justice Served: How I Represented Myself to Victory*.

This experience underscores the critical importance of honoring the last will and testament of our loved ones—especially their choice of executors—as the final act of dignity and respect for the life they lived and the legacy they intended to leave. Essential reforms—such as upholding testamentary intent as affirmed in cases like *Goeber v. Goeber* (Texas Supreme Court), limiting excessive fees, and involving both family and independent professionals in oversight—would directly address the very injustices my family and so many others have endured.

"Granny's Bill" is a necessary step to ensure that Maryland's probate system protects these sacred wishes and shields families from unnecessary hardship and indignity. I am lending the same enthusiastic support to this House bill that I championed in the Senate. By passing Granny's Bill, you will ensure that Maryland's elders are treated with the dignity and justice they deserve.

Let us stand together to protect their legacies and uphold the rights enshrined in our Constitution. The final act of respect for a life well lived is to honor their last will and testament, including their chosen executors. I urge you to champion this essential reform and pass Granny's Bill to ensure Maryland's probate courts remain guardians of fairness, respect, and dignity for all families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Owens', with a large, stylized initial 'B' and a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Congressman Burgess Owens
Utah's Fourth District

GrannysLaw-HB0375-Testimony-ctsimms-Jan2026.pdf

Uploaded by: Carrington Simms

Position: FAV

HB0375

Support: FAV

Name: Carrington T. Simms III

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Testimony to HB0375 – Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wills - Evidence of Intent (Granny's Law)

Date: 2-Feb-2026

I am in favor of HB0375, as this will be beneficial to the personal representative of a descendant of their will, which would allow for the representative to fulfill their legal obligation of the execution of the will in accordance with the deceased wishes. Although the will may have some subjectiveness to its execution, HB0375 would allow for the representative to execute the will in a manner that is keeping to the deceased wishes based on evidence of prior statements or documentation for which they may have either established a pattern or expressed among other witnesses of their purpose to support those beneficiaries documented in their Will.

I see the purpose of HB0375 to keep intact the deceased intent, as well as allowing the representative some leeway to ensure the will's intent is executed in the manner supporting the deceased.

I support HB0375, as it may benefit me as well for when my remaining parent passes and I'm left with handling her affairs.

Thank you for reading this testimony.

HB0375_ FAV_ Black Women for Positive Change.pdf

Uploaded by: Danyell Smith

Position: FAV



BLACK WOMEN FOR POSITIVE CHANGE

1220 L. Street, NW, # 100-181
Washington, D.C. 20005



February 2, 2026

To Whom It May Concern,

Black Women for Positive Change is a multi-cultural advocacy network of Women, Good Brothers, Inter-Faith Leaders, Business Leaders, GenZs, Millennials, Xers and Boomers in America, Mexico, Canada, the UK and several African nations. We have sponsor 15 years of Months of Non-Violence, Self Worth and Understanding Artificial Intelligence. We partner with 100 Fathers Inc., National Black Nurses Association, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Everytown for Gun Safety, National Association for Community Mediation, and many other organizations and institutions. Part of our mission is to strengthen families and to protect the estates that families have worked hard to acquire.

Therefore, we ask you to accept this letter as our support for Maryland SB0190 and HB0375 Granny's Law, Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wills - Evidence of Intent.

The probate, estates and trust system is in need of reform and we believe this one step in the right direction. Therefore, we ask the Maryland General Assembly to pass this legislation.

Thank you,

Dr. Stephanie Myers

Dr. Stephanie Myers
National Co-Chair
Black Women for Positive Change

Danyell Smith

Danyell Smith
Chair, Baltimore, Maryland Chapter
Black Women for Positive Change

DF HB 0375 Written Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Divina Fisher

Position: FAV



HB 0375 – Granny’s Law

Position: SUPPORT – FAV

Name: Divina Fisher

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Email: divine@bydivinedesign.me

Phone Number: (240) 646-2328

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

In Support of House Bill 0375 – Estates and Trusts – Interpretation of Wills – Evidence of Intent
(Granny’s Law)
Judiciary Committee – February 4, 2026

Introduction

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 0375 (Granny’s Law). My name is Divina Fisher. I am a victims’ advocate with over 20 years of experience, and I bring firsthand knowledge of the Register of Wills and probate court system—having personally served as a court-recognized personal representative for my mother’s estate.

I want to be clear at the outset: this is a horrible experience I do not enjoy revisiting. However, if we do not stand for something, we risk falling for anything. I appear before you because HB 0375 addresses a significant structural gap in Maryland’s probate system—one that can devastate families when discretion is exercised without verification, sensitivity, or due process, particularly in cases involving caregivers and intestate estates.



Background and Standing

For more than three and a half years, I was my mother's full-time, unpaid caregiver while she battled terminal stage-four cancer. I left my job and my career to care for her at home, managing her medical needs, household affairs, and finances. This was an act of love, responsibility, and commitment.

When my mother passed away intestate, I was lawfully appointed as personal representative of her estate, alongside my brother. For nearly one full year, I administered the estate responsibly and in accordance with Maryland law, ensuring bills were paid and assets preserved.

Failure of Due Process

Despite this lawful appointment, a probate judge removed both personal representatives without notice, without contacting us, and without an evidentiary hearing, based solely on an unverified claim that I was "out of the country."

That claim was false. I had been in Florida for one week and was fully available to appear. No effort was made to verify this information, even though the estate had already been open for nearly a year and no emergency existed that would justify bypassing fundamental procedural safeguards.

Judicial Overreach and Human Consequences

Upon returning, I attempted to continue paying the mortgage—an obligation I had managed for years—only to learn I could no longer access the account because authority had already been transferred. That single decision triggered a chain of irreversible consequences.

My brother and I requested mediation in good faith, seeking to resolve family matters responsibly and preserve the estate. The court declined and instead ordered the forced sale of the family home, disregarding caregiver testimony and the practical realities of estate administration.

The consequences were devastating:



- ❖ The estate forfeited all tangible personal property
- ❖ Assets were consumed through legal processes
- ❖ The home ultimately foreclosed
- ❖ Everything my parents worked for was lost

This outcome was not the result of neglect or mismanagement—it was the result of unchecked discretion exercised without adequate verification or patience.

Why HB 0375 Is Necessary

Probate is not merely a legal process—it is a deeply human one. Yet too often, judges and attorneys are required to administer estates under time pressure, heavy caseloads, and limited context, which more often than not, lead to decisions that overlook caregiver contributions and family realities.

House Bill 0375 restores balance by:

- ❖ Allowing courts to consider extrinsic evidence of intent
- ❖ Protecting the authority of lawful personal representatives
- ❖ Recognizing the critical role of caregivers, particularly when a person dies intestate

These safeguards help ensure that estates are administered thoughtfully, deliberately, and with respect for those who carried the burden of care.

Conclusion

Probate courts should exist to honor intent, protect families, and ensure fairness—not to silence caregivers, reward misrepresentation, or issue irreversible harmful and costly decisions.



House Bill 0375 strengthens trust, accountability, and justice for families and caregivers in a system families are sadly forced to be a part of during their most vulnerable moments.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on House Bill 0375, with a small amendment to ensure protection for the primary caregiver when a person dies intestate.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Divina Fisher

2026-02-02

Divina Fisher

Victims' Advocate | Former Personal Representative | Family Caregiver

HB0375_FAV_Commissioner Elinor Thompson.pdf

Uploaded by: Elinor Thompson

Position: FAV

Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wills - Evidence of Intent (Granny's Law) HB0375

Commissioner Elinor Thompson

Support FAV

Address: 1501 A Berkley Ct

Harwood, MD 20776

443-788-7172

elinorthompson4@gmail.com

Dear Judiciary Chair, Vice Chair and Committee Members,

I am Commissioner Elinor Thompson and I have served for 8 years on the Maryland African American History and Culture Commission.

While I do many things and do them well. Being human is one of the things I do best.

I have buried my Mother, Grandmother, Aunt, Husband and Sister-in-Law all from Cancer. I heard what happened to Jennifer's grandmother it should never have happened.

I urge you to pass HB0375Granny's Law and do what is right in the eyes of the Lord.

Sincerely,

Former Commissioner Elinor Thompson

Former Commissioner Elinor Thompson

Late testimony

Uploaded by: Glenn A Blackwell

Position: FAV

Support: FAV

Glenn A. Blackwell

Address: 6 Mill Creek Court, Owings Mills, MD 21117

Email: glennblackwell@verizon.net

Phone: 443-463-9492

Dear Judicial Proceedings Chair, Vice Chair and Committee Members:

I have the pleasure of knowing and working with Jennifer Johnson through our local genealogical society chapter. I emailed Jen this morning and expressed how proud I am of her and how much she genuinely reminds me of my own daughter who is just a few years younger than she. Jennifer reminds me so much of my wonderful daughter; they are both smart, committed, and fierce about their passions. I'm proud and pleased to say that my daughter is, in many ways, a chip off the old block.

This letter, however, is about Jennifer and about Granny's Law, legislation in honor of Jennifer's grandmother, legislation that seeks to correct historical wrongs in the probate system.

I think it is the precise time in our state for this legislation's passage as it is a nice complement to the recent passage of the reparations legislation which is also led by Senator Muse.

As the President of The Baltimore Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society (BAAHGS), we frequently encounter the history of probate law in our research and how we as African Americans were chattel property in probate proceedings for many decades of our nation's nascent history. While that period has thankfully passed, it is sad that vestiges of that era still remain.

It is with my unique position and understanding of the historical wrongs seen in wills, and the understanding of the wrongs that happened to Jennifer and her grandmother's estate, that I wholeheartedly support Granny's Law legislation and ask for your full committee's favorable support.

Sincerely,

Glenn A. Blackwell

HB0375_FAV_Irene Henderson.pdf

Uploaded by: Irene Henderson

Position: FAV

HB0375 Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wills - Evidence of Intent (Granny's Law)
Support FAV
Irene Simms Henderson
Address: 2209 West Rogers Ave Baltimore, MD 21209
Email: Irenecsh@hotmail.com Phone: 914 645 3020

February 2, 2026

Dear Judiciary Committee Chair, Vice Chair and Members,

Please note the only thing that has changed from the last time I gave testimony is that I have had more people die in my friends and family circle in the last several months most from cancer and cardiovascular health issue. I still very much urge your committees' favorable passage of Granny's Law and ask that you respect my family and all other Maryland family's and pass this legislation.

My name is Irene Simms Henderson and I was married to my beloved husband Dr. Roland Henderson for 56 years and 4 months. He had cancer 3 times and the 4th time he got cancer unfortunately, he lost his battle. He was treated at Memorial Sloan Kettering for 21+ years. My grandfather was a cancer survivor but lost his battle and then my mother had cancer along with each of her 4 brothers all but one passed from cancer and the last sibling who survived cancer passed from a heart attack. My only sibling, my brother, has been living with cancer for well over 5 years. I too had cancer but thankfully it was a mild case.

When I hear about the startling statistic for African Americans and Cancer, I don't need to see the numbers, as I have unfortunately experienced this personally right in my own family. Jennifer took excellent care of her grandmother in life and I think the testament that she is pursuing this legislation is clear evidence she is taking excellent care of her grandmother in death.

There are very few people I trust to help me as I grow old, Jennifer is one of those

people I trust and rely on as she is dependable, compassionate and a shrewd business woman.

I knew Jennifer's grandmother and I know what happened to her estate and to Jennifer is not anything that she would have ever wanted. The courts treatment of Jennifer was beyond disturbing. My mother was a Reverend and as many say "But God". I thank God for protecting and keeping Jennifer in spite of the horrid court system. I support Granny's Law HB0375 and I highly suggest the Judicial Proceedings Committee do the same.

Sincerely,

Irene Simms Henderson

Late testimony

Uploaded by: Jaelon T Moaney

Position: FAV



Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture

84 Franklin Street, Annapolis, MD 21401 410-216-6180

www.africanamerican.maryland.gov

MCAAHC

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Kennedi Wilson

Wesley Wood

Delegate Sean Stinnett
315 Lowe House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 2, 2026

Dear Delegate Stinnett,

The Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture is committed to discovering, documenting, preserving, collecting, and promoting Maryland’s African American heritage. The Commission also provides technical assistance to institutions and groups with similar objectives. Through the accomplishment of this mission, the MCAAHC seeks to educate Maryland citizens and visitors to our state about the significance of the African American experience in Maryland.

We support Granny's Law legislation HB0375, led by Senate sponsor Senator Anthony Muse and House lead sponsor, Delegate Sean Stinnett. We ask for your committee’s full favorable support and passage of HB0375 as it helps correct historical wrongs in the probate system for all Marylanders with a specific benefit to African Americans.

Sincerely,

Jaelon T. Moaney

Jaelon T. Moaney

Vice Chair

Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture

HB0375_FAV_Janice Curtis Greene.pdf

Uploaded by: Janice Greene

Position: FAV

HB0375 Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wills - Evidence of Intent (Granny's Law)
Support FAV
Janice Curtis Greene
Address: 3406 Merle Drive Windsor Mill, Md 21244
Email: janicethegriot@aol.com Phone: 443-253-1804

Dear Judiciary Committee Members Chair and Vice Chair,

I am writing you today in support of HB0375 Granny's Law Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wills - Evidence of Intent.

I have heard the horrific story of what happened to Ms. Jennifer Johnson and her Grandmother's Estate. It is WRONG and as Ms. Johnson stated during her testimony on January 20th, 2026 for the Judicial Proceedings Committee " No one else in our state ever needs to go through what she has walked through "

See I too am an elder and when I think of drafting my own will, I could care less about what judges and lawyers think but more so about the safety and protection of my loved ones and my assets when I am no longer here to protect things myself.

The fact that it has been the state of Maryland's goal to help those battling health disparities for the last 23 years yet a judge refused to align with existing Maryland State Policy, which has an entire Subcommittee in the Maryland General Assembly maybe one of the very reasons why we as African Americans are suffering so badly from health disparities.

My husband just survived cancer and as his primary caregiver, I know not only how hard cancer can be on the person diagnosed and their family but I also know the toll it takes on the caregiver. While I am so glad my husband survived this has been a very challenging ordeal.

I honestly think someone should do a review/ audit of the judge who handled this case and the lawyers involved and in general all charities involved because this should absolutely NEVER have happened.

I implore your committee to Pass SB0190 and HB0375 Granny's Law immediately and protect the citizens of our state.

Sincerely,

Janice Curtis Greene

HB0375_FAV_Jennifer Johnson.pdf

Uploaded by: Jennifer Johnson

Position: FAV



Granny's Law

Lead Senate Sponsor: Senator Muse

Lead House Sponsor: Delegate Stinnett

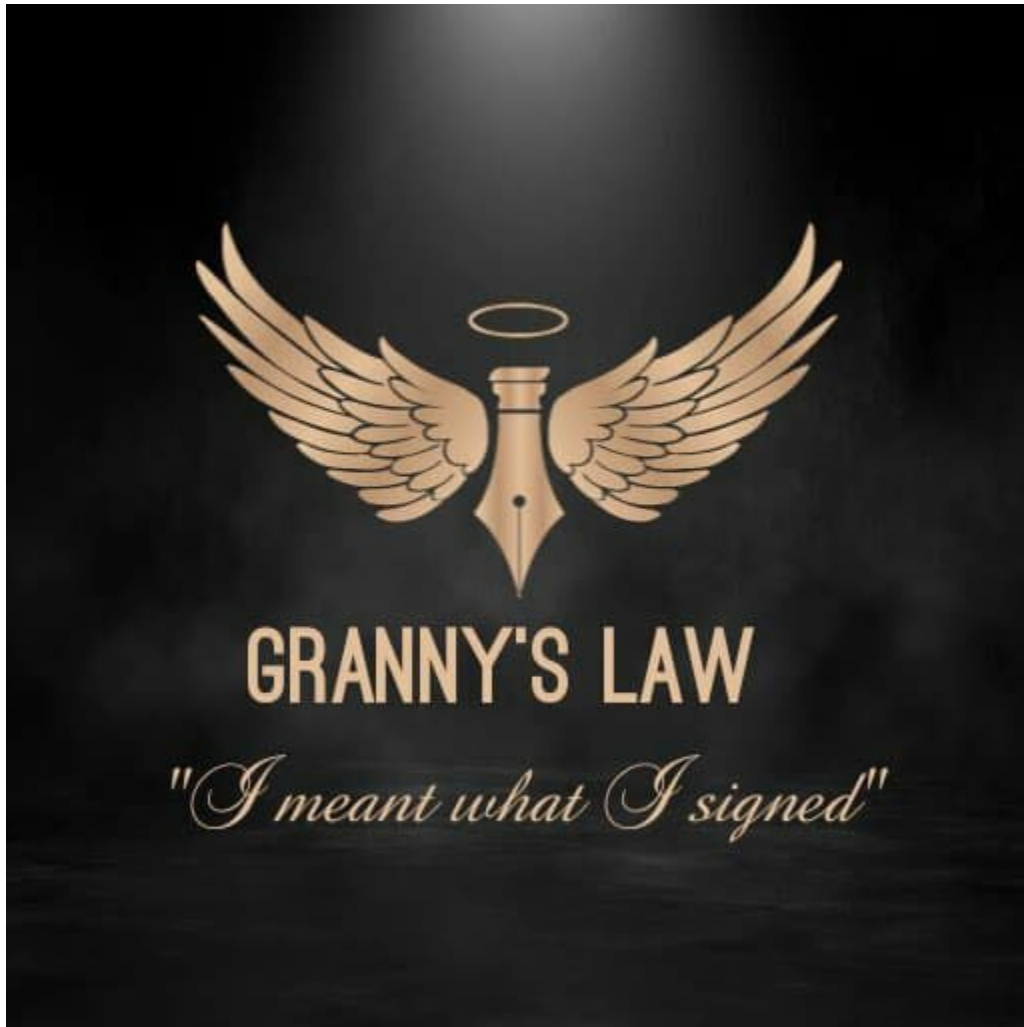
Co-Sponsors: Senator Attar, Senator Lam, Senator Cory McCray, Delegate Pasteur, Delegate Peña-Melnyk, Delegate N. Scott Phillips, Delegate Sandy Rosenberg, Delegate Ruff, Delegate Sheree Sample-Hughes, Delegate Simmons, Delegate Jennifer White Holland, Delegate Wims, Delegate Woorman.

Visit <https://grannylaw.com/> to stay updated on the legislation

The probate system as a whole comes from a background of slave owners and wealthy men treating women, other classes and enslaved as property. It has its roots in ancient Rome, Medieval England and Colonial America. This legislation seeks to correct these historical wrongs, giving more power to caregivers, most of which are women.

Caregivers often times neglect themselves taking care of others. Then these same caregivers are forced by the probate system to repeat this unhealthy practice of putting everyone's needs before their own. This legislation will give more power and authority back to the one who has done most of the work caring for the deceased in life and in death and will actually allow existing language in most people's wills to be actualized instead of the current practice of being ignored by lawyers and judges so they can make large profits. Approximately 2.6 million people in the United States go through Probate on an annual basis. While it is unknown exactly how many Maryland residents go through probate annually, we on an annual basis lose approximately 61,000 Maryland citizens to death. Hence, we can estimate based on the death total alone that thousands of Marylanders will benefit from Granny's Law.

"Granny's Law" has a beneficial impact on communities of color. Health disparities are plaguing minorities. This legislation will help correct historical wrongs and reinforce, what the Maryland General Assembly already sees as a priority, by having the Subcommittee on Public Health and Minority Health Disparities.



Support FAV

HB0375 Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wills - Evidence of Intent (Granny's Law)

Jennifer Johnson

Address: PO Box 1 Randallstown MD 21133

Phone number: 410-241-4331

Email address: jenniferelsiejohnson@hotmail.com

February 2, 2026

Dear Judiciary Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Committee Members,

Request Your Support:

My name is Jennifer Johnson and I ask for your full committee's favorable support for "Granny's Law" HB0375 Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wills - Evidence of Intent.

What happened to me was a direct violation of my grandmother's written will and of my human rights and needs to never happen to anyone else again in our state. This legislation represents a real-life solution for a real serious problem.

No Fiscal Note:

I can tell from the fiscal note that similar legislation was introduced in prior years. I urge you to please break this negative cycle and make positive change in Maryland and pass HB0375, which has a zero-dollar impact on the state's budget.

HB0375 Granny's Law will CORRECT the following:

- Historical Wrongs of Health-related Charities not supporting Maryland State Policy of working to eradicate Health Disparities
- Historical wrongs of the Orphans Courts ignoring people's wills and essentially allowing lawyers to make large profits off of deceased people's estates.
- Historical wrongs of the Orphans court overriding the descendant's family's and trusted personal representatives
- Historical wrongs imposed on Caregivers. Caregivers are most often times the Power of Attorney and then the Personal Representative. Caregiver's rights and respect are often times ignored. This bill seeks to give the power and authority back to the person who has done most if not all of the work to help the decedent in life and in death.
- This bill will help honor my Granny (Jennifer Johnson) and anyone else's loved one whose will and/ or estate was or unfortunately is currently being grossly misinterpreted by the orphan courts in Maryland.

Why Case Law Can be very problematic and cause harm to women and minorities:

Opponents will reference case law; I think it is important to understand that many times case law was developed during periods in time where women and various ethnic minorities especially African Americans were not even viewed as humans but rather property. This is extremely problematic and hence not something to follow. Pass this legislation and make some positive new case law.

Horrifying Situation, no one else should go through:

I have never been through anything so horrific in my entire life and Granny's Law seeks to make sure, this never happens to anyone else in our state ever again. To give you a very brief synopsis, my grandmother was leaving a large charitable donation to 4 major health related charities with the goal of positively impacting African American lives as we are disproportionately affected by health disparities. While all of these organizations document that African Americans are disproportionately affected by all of these disease states, instead of allowing me to be what I am God ordained to be, my grandmother's Personal Representative, a Baltimore county judge thought she knew better than me, knew better than my grandmother and forced me into jail when my best friend was dying of cancer and allowed 2 attorneys she preferred to bill a beyond excessive amount of money for work I completed. The judge's order forced me to give all of my grandmother's information and all the work I completed to bring the estate almost to a close to these lawyers or I could not get out of the jail.

Judge Juliet Fisher of Baltimore County orphan's court judge allowed these 2 attorneys to bill almost double the annual salary for Senate and Delegate members for Maryland General Assembly against my grandmother's estate for work I completed. Something that would have cost me around \$3,000 max and a matter of weeks to complete had the courts never gotten involved. Wound up costing my grandmother's legacy and did the exact opposite of what my grandmother wanted, which was to help African Americans who are already suffering. It cost me years of my life as it is taking me time to recover. It broke my mother's heart and caused her unnecessary stress and per the instructions in my grandmother's will I may or may not have hired an attorney to complete the administration of her will, because the will was very simple and straightforward if followed.

Instead, the 2 Court assigned lawyers billed my grandmother's estate at a rate of \$395 an hour per attorney. My first attorney gave me all of my fees back as I had done all of the work to bring it almost to a close that was around \$25,000, that firm is recognized as one of the best in the industry. This was before the courts decided to do the damage and destruction they did and the court assigned attorneys billed almost 4 times as much as my first attorney and did the exact opposite of anything I or my grandmother would have ever wanted and in the end threatened to do even more damage if I did not stop questioning or verbally protesting what they were doing. One should also note that there is a clause in my grandmother's will that is in most wills that the court forcibly ignored. The clause in question if not ignored by the courts would not have allowed the judge or her assigned attorneys to do any of these things she did to me or to my grandmother's estate. The clause is also common language in many, if not most people's wills. That clause is included in the House and Senate bill. Additionally, I had 8 expert witnesses testify to the health disparities I and my family and friends as African Americans face the judges did not care. My attorney fees were around \$7,000 for me to get arrested and for an appeal and yet the court appointed attorneys did nothing but billed almost \$100,000 against my grandmother's estate. Again, nothing my grandmother, I or my family would have ever wanted.

The will works if you work it:

A few examples I will give, nothing works until you work it. If you have ever been on a diet but didn't stick to it... I am sure you likely didn't drop many pounds because you choose pizza, candy and ice cream over water and fruits and lots of veggies and lean protein. Ones will is very similar if you follow the will, it works if you use the courts and override people's wills and do things never stated in the will you do not get the decedents desired results you get for lack of a better word and putting it mildly a "hot mess". Nowhere in my grandmothers will does it say she wants her information or money in the hands of strangers or for me to have to go to jail, yet sadly these were the outcomes because her will was not followed. Just a few examples of things that should never have happened the court appointed attorney's instead of using my grandmother's trusted CPA of over 31 years who had started the taxes already, used a firm 10 times more expensive, something my grandmother would absolutely never have wanted. The judges ruling also missed a very basic concept of charities are to give to the needy. Who is most needy as it relates to health disparities, African Americans my grandmother's intended audience as she was African American and we are already suffering disproportionately.

Please Support this Legislation and bring Honor where there is currently disgrace:

I hope that you will see the disproportionate needs faced by African Americans in many areas of disease but specifically in the area of cancer, cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer's and mental illness and understand that the correct thing to do and way to help is to give your committees full favorable support for this legislation and help honor all groups suffering from health disparities, help honor all caregivers many of whom die while taking care of others and help honor my Granny. Thanks for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Elsie Johnson

BS Chemistry, MBA

Founder Friends of St. Peter's Cemetery

President and CEO of Saved It Inc.

<https://grannyslaw.com/>

In loving memory of my Granny & in Honor of all of our family and friends who have lost their battles to various health disparities

Articles for your review on Caregivers, Health Disparities and Law

Caregiver Burnout

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9225-caregiver-burnout>

Why It's Critical to Develop a Backup Family Caregiving Plan

<https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/basics/info-2024/backup-care-plan.html>

Baltimore group provides lifeline for Black women who are caregivers

<https://www.cbsnews.com/baltimore/news/baltimore-binti-black-caregivers-daughters-parents/>

NAACP Calls for Cancer to Be Declared A Public Health Crisis In The Black Community

<https://www.blackenterprise.com/naacp-cancer-declared-public-health-crisis-black-community/>

How Racism Leads to Cancer Health Disparities

<https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/health-equity/racism-health-disparities.html>

How History Has Shaped Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities

<https://www.kff.org/how-history-has-shaped-racial-and-ethnic-health-disparities-a-timeline-of-policies-and-events/?entry=1808-to-1890-medical-exploitation-of-enslaved-black-women>

Health Equity: Overview, History, and Key Concepts | Springer Publishing

<https://connect.springerpub.com/content/book/978-0-8261-7724-7/part/part01/chapter/ch01>

174 Bills Signed into Law, Including Stacey's Law and Others to Honor Marylanders (2019)

<https://marylandmatters.org/2019/04/30/174-bills-signed-into-law-including-staceys-law-and-others-to-honor-marylanders/>

Law school project finds slavery citations still being used today

[Law school project finds slavery citations still being used today | AP News](#)

HB 0375_FAV_ Jesse Bennett.pdf

Uploaded by: Jesse Bennett

Position: FAV

HB 0375 Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wills - Evidence of Intent (Granny's Law)

Name: Jesse James Bennett, Jr.

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Phone number: 443 286-5355

Support FAV

February 2, 2026 2026

**HOUSE BILL 0375 ESTATES AND TRUSTS – INTERPRETATION OF WILLS –
EVIDENCE OF INTENT (GRANNY’S LAW)**

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE IN SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSED
LEGISLATION

My name is Jesse Bennett, I am a resident of Randallstown, Baltimore County, Maryland and I am in full support of this proposed legislation. I was a Volunteer Research Coordinator for the Mount Auburn Cemetery located in the Westport community in Southwest Baltimore City, and I was a member of the Maryland Cemetery Legislative Advocates.

In my personal and advocacy positions, this legislation attempts to give an option to persons who administer estates of deceased family members other properly identified designees, an opportunity to give testimony to the deceased’s wishes.

Every deceased person’s intention, when clearly written, should not become objects of judges and lawyer’s reinterpretation. We have all heard stories of how a will can be misinterpreted, mismanaged, and actually stolen by court appointed attorneys who are charged with resolving estates.

The tragic story of how the Johnson Family’s estate was abused, and how their request to intervene in their deceased family member desires were denied, causing heartbreak, stress, economic loss because of legal defense fees as they simply tried to carry out the will of their loved one.

Many families who go through Probate to settle their loved one’s estates do not have the economic status to pursue legal remedies to contest inequities during the process.

I believe the safeguards in HOUSE BILL 0375 better known as Granny's Law, will improve the process for all Maryland citizens going forward.

In December of 1988 my eighty-eight years old grandmother passed away leaving a typed, signed, one-page, notarized LAST Will AND TESTIMENT with five (5) descendants listed. Two of those descendants had died, leaving me, the third name on the list, as her estate administrator.

I began the Probate process by following her listed desires, which included selling her home; distributing her assets (clothes, household goods, retrieving her insurance policy, burial expenses, and sharing the Probate financial residual funds to my siblings. While not a complicated process, I fully understand how my Granny's wishes could easily have been misinterpreted and turned into a scheme by any unscrupulous attorney for personal profit.

I make the case today, as I was very close to my grandmother and we had several discussions about her pending health condition and death; the details in her will were clear to a point. As Administrator, I had to make decisions and clarifications as she discussed directly with me, and as her listed will required. I hired a trusted attorney who listened to my discussion with my Granny. Mrs. Johnson and her family faced a terrible denial of input into her grandmother's estate. Granny's Law HB 0375 will allow many Maryland families to have a say into the distribution of a relative's desires. Especially since the family understood what the decedent

Please lend your support and vote FAVORABLY on HOUSE BILL 0375.

Thank you for your time today.

HB0375_FAV_JohnHMorris.pdf

Uploaded by: John Morris

Position: FAV

HB0375 Granny's Law
Support FAV
John H. Morris, Jr.
1210 East 33rd Street
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jmorris706@aol.com

February 2, 2026

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB0375

I am John H. Morris, Jr. This testimony is submitted in support of the legislation identified as HB0375. I have been a civil litigator. From 1985 through 1993, I have been a partner at Venable, Baetjer and Howard. Over the years, I have served as a visiting professor of law at the University of Baltimore, an instructor in Urban Planning and Community Economic Development at Sojourner Douglass College, and an instructor in Constitutional Law at Stevenson University. I have been a federal public defender in the District of Maryland, special assistant to the general counsel of the federal Department of Education, a law clerk to federal judge, Hon. Joseph H. Young, in the district of Maryland. In addition to the above, in my civic life, I have served as a member of the board of directors for such local not-for-profit organizations as the Baltimore Children and Youth Fund, Associated Black Charities, Interfaith Action for Racial Justice, the American Civil Liberties

Union – Maryland, and the Public Justice Center. I secured my education in law through a law degree from Yale Law School.

Through the above professional and civic associations, I have encountered direct experience with the contradictions and paradoxes of prescribed equality, as well as both taught and written on the subject. It is in this capacity that I hereby testify as to the urgency of the pending legislation.

HB0375 is crafted simply to facilitate a bequest to address health disparities so as to give a voice to the intention of a decedent through the admission of extrinsic evidence regarding the life's work of the decedent to clarify that intention. Such legislation is needed to respond to the readiness of institutions to continue and persist in practices that promote racial disparity in their common resistance to engage in effective self-critique. Such change too often requires an investment in insight into the problem that the institution may need to acquire or change that necessitates expense. A simple bequest to a health provider, absent more specific direction regarding its application, too often underwrites an organization's existing practices that have historically yielded the disparities whose elimination past adoptions of Maryland law have identified as the focus of public policy.

The problem presented here is that it is often difficult to align the intention underlying a will provision with the intentions of the person making a bequest without a deep understanding of who the person is making the will. Ordinarily,

courts may not consider extrinsic evidence of a person's intentions in making a will when courts construe the will. Nevertheless, the court may consider what it calls extrinsic evidence – proof outside the wording of the will itself -- only to resolve an established ambiguity reflected in the wording of the document. The problem this principle does not anticipate is what happens then the plain unambiguous wording of a will's bequest, if executed without due clarification by extrinsic evidence, plainly makes a mockery of the decedent's life in that, knowing the decedent, it would be simply unthinkable that the decedent intended the argued result brought about by the wording in the will without the added clarification.

Consider this hypothetical illustration of the problem.

In 1955, Rosa Parks accumulated a sizeable fortune. After refusing to give up her seat on the bus, sparking the Montgomery Bus Boycott, she has considered ways in which her fortune might be used to facilitate the desegregation of Montgomery's buses, and has met with her lawyer to revise her will to make a large bequest to the transit company to soften the transition to a new equitable arrangement for the buses. Understanding that negotiations between the City of Montgomery, the Montgomery Improvement Association to be ongoing, and expecting Dr. King to use this financial gift as an inducement to secure equity, Rosa's will be drafted with no express proviso restricting use of the funds to desegregation efforts. Before the boycott is resolved, Rosa dies unexpectedly, and her will is probated. So, Relying upon the principle that the unambiguous wording of a will should control its interpretation, the transit company insists that the probate court direct Rosa's gift be given it to support its ordinary segregated operation while it opposes the boycott. Faced with a rule like the one now in place in Maryland, Rosa's personal representative is powerless to effectuate Rosa's intentions while allowing her otherwise unambiguous will to be interpreted to assist the continued operation she went to jail to oppose.

In the above hypothetical, HB0375 would allow Rosa Parks to speak beyond the grave, through her personal representative's recitation of her life, to clarify that the bequest to an organization otherwise advancing racial disparity was not intended to support the organization's racially disparate operation but only to facilitate a change in that organization's operation to promote a racially equitable impact. In the case of health results, the legislation would also support an outcome that Maryland law determines to be favorable to public policy.

Moreover, HB0375 anticipates circumstances where its prescription would have wide application. There is an emerging pool of generational wealth arising from the Civil Rights Revolution of the 1960s about to be dispersed as aging Black entrepreneurs and professionals live out their retirement years and look to dispose of the remainder of the savings that had sustained their retirement. That new wealth to directed by them with due legal protection of its intended application, may reflect the most effective support of the State's articulation of public policy than any formal appropriation of public funds.

Why might anyone oppose this outcome? This testimony is not intended to offer the answer to that question, only to acknowledge that there are indeed entities opposed to that outcome. These entities may profess the best of intentions or contend that, somehow, they know better; yet, nonetheless, they somehow manage outcomes that promote the disparity they degree. These entities require the

incentive structure that HB0375 promotes to achieve success in eliminating disparity.

Those opposing this legislation say that, while they sympathize with its objective of addressing health disparities, they contend that the legislation is contrary to established caselaw, and that they do not understand how it addresses the professed objective. Those opposed to this legislation are wrong on both points, leaving in place of their opposition, only the favorable objective they commend.

Specifically, they maintain that law only permits extrinsic evidence of the decedent's intent where the will is patently ambiguous, such as where the will would appear to make a confusing reference to two or more legatees. This legislation's opponents accordingly accept an understanding of ambiguity limited to the above circumstance. The Legislation embraces an understanding of ambiguity beyond that arising from imprecise drafting causing the confusion of potential legatees, to include an ambiguity arising from an imprecise indication of intent arising from the decedent's assumption that an intention to advance an outcome that the law already accepts as public policy requires a more direct announcement. To the extent that such confusion between the language set forth in the will and the different outcome intended by a decedent's relying upon the law's declaration of public policy to inform the reading of the will to reflect that intent,

the law should also provide the remedy to rectify the confusion it might otherwise promote. HB0375 provides such a remedy that the law otherwise does not offer.

The opponents would not allow such extrinsic proof to clarify the intention of the decedent when the Court's proposed interpretation of a will bequest simply contradicts how the decedent has lived his or her life. Is procedural conformance more important than honoring the life's work of the decedent as it may inform intention? The opponents to this legislation simply overlook that power of this body to clarify what the law should be – particularly when it has previously articulated public policy, and the outcome that this legislation supports is entirely compatible with that policy.

Last, the opponents observe that the objective of this legislation can easily be achieved with the intervention of good lawyering in crafting a suitable will. How far should the assumption of good lawyering go? In criminal law, for example, the Constitution and the Maryland Declaration of Rights assure good lawyering to every criminal defendant. Yet, that guarantee is not, as a matter of law, sufficient to require the upholding of every guilty verdict secured with a defendant's provision of counsel. The law nonetheless provides a process for the court to determine whether the criminal proceedings were tainted by counsel's ineffectiveness. This legislation offers similar procedural protection to promote the intention of the decedent notwithstanding the availability of counsel. Is that

process unreasonable where the Court may be proceeding demonstrably contrary to the decedent's intention? Isn't such provision a reasonable application of the law not otherwise afforded? This legislature has the power to make things right, and it should here exercise that authority contrary to the recommendation of the opponents to this legislation.

Ironically, it is the existence of that inexplicable opposition that speaks to the necessity for this legislation. Without the protection this legislation would afford to the clarified intention of the decedent, it is hard to imagine a future where such disparities no longer persist. The General Assembly should therefore adopt HB0375 as law in Maryland.

GrannysLaw.pdf

Uploaded by: Jonathan Farley

Position: FAV

HB0375

Support: FAV

Name: Jonathan Farley, D.Phil. (Oxon.)

address: 6865 Fourth Section Road, PO Box 206, Brockport, NY 14420

email: lattice.theory@gmail.com

Statement by Jonathan Farley, D.Phil. (Oxon.) in support of HB0375

On February 5, 2023, my brother Christopher John Farley directed police who dragged my 84-year-old mother Ena Farley out of her own house, tying up her hands and feet like a fugitive slave. You can see for yourself on the YouTube channel “Free Ena Farley” that has over 2 million views. They had no warrant or court order. My mother was the sole owner of her house and had not been declared mentally incompetent by a judge or doctor.

Before she passed away, she said on video to a church friend that she wanted me to have her house and all her physical possessions.

She could not change her will since she was locked up against her will by my brother in a memory-care facility and not allowed to make phone calls or consult a lawyer of her own choosing.

After my mother passed away, my brother through his agents used the threat of physical force against a 79-year-old black woman Jane Farley, then living in the house, to illegally evict her and seize the house, and now my brother claims to have sold it, keeping 100% of the proceeds, according to his lawyer.

I hope my former Harvard University classmate Senator Malcolm Augustine and his colleagues will support HB0375, Granny’s Law.

I support Granny’s Law because violating the wishes of the elderly concerning what they want to do with their assets is another form of elder abuse.

HB0375 Granny's Law Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Joseph Kelly

Position: FAV

HB0375

Support: FAV

Name: Joseph Kelly

phone number:301-636-7058

Dear Chair Bartlett and Members of
the Judiciary Committee,

It is my pleasure to write this letter to
you asking for your Committee's full
favorable support and passage of
HB0375 Granny's Law Estates and
Trusts - Interpretation of Wills -
Evidence of Intent.

You know we sadly never know what
tomorrow brings, life is short. I
recently and unexpectedly lost my
mother and it made me cherish my
wife and children and grandchild
even more.

What I do know is that when my time comes, I want some reassurance that my Will/Estate and/or Trust will hold strong.

HB0375 Granny's Law, gives a measure of protection that the horrific situation that happened to Granny will not happen to me, my wife or my heirs.

I ask for your committee's full favorable support and passage of HB0375 Granny's Law.

Thank you

Joseph Kelly

HB0375 Granny's Law.pdf

Uploaded by: Joseph Kelly

Position: FAV

HB0375

Support: FAV

Name: Joseph Kelly

phone number:301-636-7058

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I ask for your committee's full favorable support and passage of HB0375 Granny's Law.

Thank you

Signature

Joseph Kelly

HB0375_FAV_Keith Auzzene.pdf

Uploaded by: Keith Auzenne

Position: FAV

HB0375 Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wills - Evidence of Intent (Granny's Law)
Support FAV Keith Auzenne
Address: 788 Frilot Cove Rd Opelousas La 70570
Email: keith_auzenne@yahoo.com Phone: 337 351 3672

February 2, 2026

Dear Judiciary Committee: Chair, Vice Chair and Members,

I testified last year and I am writing to you again today from the great "Pelican State" of Louisiana. My name is Keith Auzenne and I have known Jennifer Johnson and her family for almost 22 years. Jennifer's grandmother was a wonderful lady and I often reminisce on some of the beautiful conversations we all shared together.

What happened to Jennifer's MawMaw (Granny) is totally unacceptable. Having lost my father's brother and my father's father to cancer and then my mother's brother and her father both to heart related issues, I know all too well how bad health disparities are killing African Americans.

My heart was broken when I found out what that judge did to Jennifer and her Granny's Estate. Jennifer shared the physical copy of the will with me and I really am baffled as to how the judge did any of the things she did as the will clearly states she should have had no authority to do anything. I was ready to fly up there and bail Jennifer out but the way the judge did what she did we couldn't even post bail for her. Jennifer's mother was a total nervous wreck as was I and all her friends and family. Lucky Jennifer is smart and got out faster than we all thought she would and was thankfully unharmed. I watched the House hearing last year and the Senate hearing this year for the bill and I found it very disturbing that the opponents want to blame what happened on the will. Since I saw the will, I know for a fact it did not state to put Jennifer in jail, it did not state that they could do any of the things they did to my dear friend. The powers that be did it because they could and the harm they caused is not anything my friend should have ever had to endure.

I'm proud of Jennifer and I know her MawMaw would be too... I ask you to pass this legislation with your full committee's support and honor the life and legacy of Jennifer's Granny. I'm fully supportive of HB0375 Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wills - Evidence of Intent Granny's Law and pray you are too. Exodus 20:12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you". Help Jennifer honor her MawMaw. The year may have changed but the truth holds.

Be Blessed,

Keith Auzenne

Late testimony

Uploaded by: Kimberly Lee

Position: FAV

Kimberly Lee
kimjlee02@gmail.com

February 2, 2026

This letter is to support of HB0375 “Granny’s Law”. I have unfortunately lost numerous loved ones to Cancer on my paternal and maternal sides of my family. I have also had numerous loved ones that have suffered with cardiovascular health issues some surviving and other passing at an early age. I have also had the experiences of seeing people suffer from mental illness and Alzheimer’s disease.

It’s It is no secret that African Americans are in dire need of help and are suffering disproportionately compared to other ethnic groups.

No one should have to worry about any interference when carrying out their loved ones wishes especially during the time of bereavement. The need for that this type of protection and support is very important. I believe “Granny’s Law” will help many others who are having the same experiences.

Kimberly Lee

written testimony for HB0375- Favorable- Lawrence

Uploaded by: Lawrence Grandpre

Position: FAV

Written Testimony

HB0375—Estates and Trusts—Interpretation of Wills—Evidence of Intent (Granny's Law)
Recommendation: Favorable

Submitted By:
Lawrence Grandpre
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Lawrence.Grandpre@gmail.com
410-501-9291

Hello,
My name is Lawrence Grandpre.

I'm writing to urge the judicial proceedings to issue a favorable review of Granny's Law, **HB0375** which would allow for extrinsic evidence to be introduced to support the right of personal representative to clarify intent in the instance of donations related to health equity.

As one of the issues I have worked extensively on is policing reform, hearing the story of Ms. Jennifer Johnson was extremely disturbing. No individual should face the possibility of police action and incarceration solely for standing up for what you believe is the sincere wishes of a loved one. Racial bias in the court system has been long-established, and the possibility of future Black residents of Maryland facing such a terrifying result seems to require legislative intervention. Beyond the technical and legalistic concerns around extrinsic evidence, I believe that the fundamental need to rectify the possibility of anything like this happening again makes this bill necessary.

Moreover, as my professional work touches on issues of wealth and health inequity, this issue of health disparities is of substantial importance to me. The Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities reported in 2024 that health gaps in preventable mortality are increasing in the state of Maryland for common causes of mortality such as stroke, diabetes, and infant mortality.¹ Even in so-called "affluent" counties like Howard County, Black people have the highest rates of heart disease and are hospitalized for high blood pressure at three times the rate of white residents.² This goes to show the need for investments in health equity in Maryland.

¹ The Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities. *Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities Report Annual Report 2023*, Maryland Health Department, 1 Mar. 2024, [health.maryland.gov/mhhd/Documents/MHHD_FY2023_Annual_Report_Final_\(1\).pdf](https://health.maryland.gov/mhhd/Documents/MHHD_FY2023_Annual_Report_Final_(1).pdf).

² Kurtz, Josh. "Report: Even in Md.'s Wealthiest County, Health Disparities Persist." *Maryland Matters*, 31 Jan. 2020, marylandmatters.org/2020/01/31/report-even-in-md-s-wealthiest-county-health-disparities-persist/.

This need to respect the ability of personal representatives is made more important when the role of racial income and wealth inequity is considered. Nationwide, post pandemic the Black-White wealth gap has continued to widen, creating almost a quarter of a million dollars on average in 2022.³ In Maryland, Black individuals make only .70 cents to every dollar white individuals make.⁴ Areas of the state that have the highest percentages of minorities (Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Prince George's County) have the highest rates of incarceration, which studies have shown has had an extreme negative effect on every metric of health and wealth in these communities.⁵ ⁶ In the face of targeted racial systemic violence, the idea that Black families who were lucky enough to be able to accumulate wealth would not have the ability to decide where this wealth goes after death is profoundly concerning.

This concern is magnified when it comes to the issue of investments in health equity. Unlike any other donation, investments in health equity are literally an issue of life and death. America's long history of medical racism means even well-meaning investments framed as "health equity" can have devastating health consequences for communities. For example, in the 1990s, the Abell Foundation invested in contraceptive implants and funded their use in Baltimore City public schools, causing a nationwide debate about informed consent and concerns over racial bias.⁷ Some of these implants had long-term negative health outcomes for the individuals who received them, leading to a lawsuit against the manufacturer.⁸

This is not to single out the Abell Foundation, but to make the point that, from their perspective, cutting teen pregnancy was a desirable health equity goal, and, for another, the way in which they pursued that end violated their notions of racial justice. This is precisely why health equity investment requires the maximum amount of input and control on behalf of a personal representative. Not only are we dealing with the possibility of funding interventions that can lead to real physical harm, or even legal liability, but, most importantly, depending on what the interpretation of the individual is, they may end up funding interventions that may do the opposite of the donor's intent.

³ Alyasah Ali Sewell, Keon L. Gilbert, and Camille Busette Gabriel R. Sanchez. "Black Wealth Is Increasing, but so Is the Racial Wealth Gap." *Brookings*, 18 Jan. 2024, www.brookings.edu/articles/black-wealth-is-increasing-but-so-is-the-racial-wealth-gap/.

⁴ Kent, Ana Hernandez. "Examining U.S. Economic Racial Inequality by State: St. Louis Fed." *Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis*, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 10 Jan. 2023, www.stlouisfed.org/publications/bridges/volume-3-2020/examining-us-economic-racial-inequality-by-state.

⁵ McKay, Tasseli. *Stolen Wealth, Hidden Power: The Case for Reparations for Mass Incarceration*. University of California Press, 2022.

⁶ Office of Social Equity. "Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund Survey Results Report." *Office of Social Equity*, Dec. 2023, ose.maryland.gov/Documents/CRRF_Report_-_OSEv3.pdf.

⁷ Licata, Justina Carmela. "The Politics of Norplant: Feminism, Civil Rights, and Social Policy in the 1990s." *NC Docks*, 2020, libres.uncg.edu/ir/uncg/f/Licata_uncg_0154D_12994.pdf.

⁸ *ibid*

The reality is one person's legitimate health equity investment is another person's example of illegitimate overreach, and it should not be up to the donor institution and judge alone to make this determination when the money to pursue these interventions comes from the hard-earned wealth of the residents of Maryland. This is especially true when the investment comes from Black and Brown Marylanders intending for the fruits of their life's work to reflect their specific vision of health equity. This is not merely a question of confusion on donor intent akin to confusion over the name of a relative; it's a fundamental distinction when donor money may be used to fund the opposite of donor intent with serious consequences.

I hope you take these comments in the spirit they are given. I understand there are legal precedents that have determined how these processes have functioned in the past. However, given that civil rights laws only passed in the 50s and 60s, we are dealing with one of the first generations of Black wealth being passed down intergenerationally from baby boomers to future generations. Thus, the legal system may not have had to consider these unique concerns when it comes to bequests focused on racial equity and the power imbalance between Black and Brown personal representatives and the legal system. Despite wealth inequity, Maryland, as home to two of the wealthiest majority Black communities in the country, and with increased ability to target their resources toward health equity, I believe these investments will have a substantial impact on health equity.

Thank You,
Lawrence Grandpre

HB0375 Estates and Trusts written testimony mto re

Uploaded by: Marie-Therese Oyalowo

Position: FAV

HB0375 Estates and Trusts-Interpretation of Wills-Evidence of Intent (Granny's Law)

Dr. Marie-Therese Oyalowo (Professor, Board Certified Oncology Pharmacist, FNAP, RN)

30920 College Backbone Road
Princess Anne, 21853
moyalowo@umes.edu
410-621-3045

Written Testimony for the Maryland State Legislators
February 2, 2026

Dear Delegate Stinnett & Committee Members,

I am pleased to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 0190, also known as "Granny's Law". I will be specifically addressing the area of health disparities among Blacks as observed in my practice. I have been a practicing pharmacist for over 40 years, and Board-Certified as an oncology pharmacist for more than 20 years. Prior to initiating my career in pharmacy, I practiced as a Registered Nurse.

Cancer is the second leading cause of death (after cardiovascular disease) nationally and globally. While there are several publications on disparities in cancer care , a few examples are presented here on the four most prevalent solid tumors in the United States:

- Mortality rates for all cancers combined between 2018-2022 was higher in both Non-Hispanic Black males and females than their Non-Hispanic White counterparts
<https://seer.cancer.gov/statfacts/html/all.html>
- In breast cancer, while the incidence of new diagnoses was higher in Non-Hispanic Whites than Blacks (139 vs 129.3 per 100,00, respectively), mortality rate was higher in the Non-Hispanic Black population (26.8/100,000) compared to 19.4/100,000 in Non-Hispanic White females
<https://seer.cancer.gov/statfacts/html/breast.html>
- In colorectal cancer, the incidence of new cases per 100,000 as well as the mortality rates are higher in both black males and females than their white counterparts
<https://seer.cancer.gov/statfacts/html/colorect.html>
- Prostate cancer provides a similar pattern of new cases and mortality, as in the aforementioned cancers, with higher incidence and mortality rates in black males.
<https://seer.cancer.gov/statfacts/html/prost.html>
- In lung cancer, the incidence of new cases and mortality are higher in black males but lower in black females <https://seer.cancer.gov/statfacts/html/lungb.html>

The area of research has also documented significant disparities in clinical trials where the population of black patients is often minimal to none in the studies. A recent study by Andre et al. (NEJM, 2024) examined novel therapies in 303 patients with colorectal cancer.

Unfortunately, there were only 4 black participants in the trial, on a cancer that is more prevalent in the black population.

It should be noted that the causes of disparities in cancer care are multifactorial, with socioeconomic factors, health literacy and access to care among several examples.

I am available to provide additional examples from my practical experience if provided with the opportunity to provide oral testimony.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Marie-Therese Oyalowo

Marie-Therese Oyalowo, PharmD, BCOP, FNAP, RN
Professor & Director of Drug Information Services
University of Maryland Eastern Shore
School of Pharmacy and Health Professions
30920 College Backbone Rd
Princess Anne, MD 21853

HB0375_ FAV_ Nunyo Demasio.pdf

Uploaded by: Nunyo Demasio

Position: FAV

Support FAV HB0375
Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wills - Evidence of Intent (Granny's Law)
Nunyo Demasio <https://nunyodemasio.com/>

Please Note: Due to public/privacy concerns, you can reach me via my website instead of my private number or home address as I am a public figure.

Dear Judiciary Committee Members, Chair Bartlett and Vice Chair Davis,

My name is **Nunyo Demasio**. I submit this written testimony in support of **Granny's Law (HB0375)** and respectfully urge the Judiciary Committee to support its passage. I offer this perspective as a private citizen, informed by personal experience with legal systems affecting older adults in vulnerable circumstances.

In matters involving aging or impaired individuals, intent is often expressed over time and across multiple forms—through communications, conduct, and long-standing relationships—not solely in a single document executed at a single moment. When courts are required to treat the text of a will as conclusive, even where credible extrinsic evidence demonstrates a different and consistent intent, outcomes can diverge sharply from the decedent's actual intent. Where an individual has expressed consistent wishes over years of conduct and communication, rigid adherence to a single document may defeat rather than effectuate that intent.

Granny's Law responds to this problem in a measured and principled way. By authorizing courts, under defined circumstances, to consider reliable extrinsic evidence, the legislation does not weaken testamentary planning. It strengthens it—by ensuring that estate plans are interpreted in accordance with the decedent's demonstrated purpose rather than frustrated by technical rigidity.

The bill's framework appropriately balances flexibility with restraint. Judicial discretion is bounded by evidentiary safeguards and defined triggering circumstances, protecting against manipulation while preserving predictability for those who engage in long-term planning. Flexibility of this kind is not a departure from the rule of law; it is a means of ensuring that the law carries out its intent rather than elevating form over substance.

The provision authorizing personal representatives to seek accountability when a legacy is being used inconsistently with its intended purpose reflects a realistic understanding of vulnerability and misuse. Oversight mechanisms of this kind are not punitive; they are protective, and they deter conduct that might otherwise undermine a decedent's objectives.

It is worth noting that, in prior sessions, opposition to this legislation came from institutional actors such as the Register of Wills, the Maryland Judiciary, and the Maryland Bar Association—entities that represent established systems. While those perspectives are important, systems are not infallible. The probate process has, for many years, produced outcomes that can stray from intent and harm families. Granny's Law represents a careful, overdue correction to that systemic problem.

Legislation that permits courts to honor clearly demonstrated intent—without authorizing wholesale revision of testamentary documents—reflects a balanced and humane approach. It reinforces planning, protects vulnerable individuals, and promotes outcomes aligned with what decedents actually wanted.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony. I respectfully request the Committee's favorable support for **Granny's Law (HB0375)**.

Sincerely,

Nunyo Demasio

HB0375_FAV_D4 Women in Action.pdf

Uploaded by: Rhonda Briggins

Position: FAV



January 25, 2026

The Honorable Members of the Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, Maryland

Re: Support for Granny's Law – Estates and Trusts: Interpretation of Wills – Evidence of Intent

Dear Members of the Maryland General Assembly,

On behalf of D4 Women in Action, I am writing to express our strong support for Maryland's *Granny's Law* legislation, currently introduced as HB375 in the House and cross-filed with SB190 in the Senate. This legislation strengthens protections for Maryland families by ensuring that the true intent of a deceased loved one—especially elders and vulnerable individuals—is honored and upheld during estate administration.

D4 Women in Action (D4) is a 501(c)(4) social welfare and advocacy organization established in July 2020 by Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., making Delta the first Black Greek-letter organization to create such an entity. Born during the twin crises of the COVID-19 pandemic and a national reckoning on racial injustice, D4 was created to safeguard Delta's tax-exempt status and to respond boldly to political attacks on Black communities.

As an independent but Delta-affiliated organization, D4 advances the sorority's long-standing commitment to action and social change. We champion policy advocacy, support legislative priorities, and uplift candidates aligned with Delta's values. Our mission is to amplify the political power of Black women by increasing their representation and influence in public policy, legislation, and elected office. We are building a strong pipeline of Black women leaders who are shaping the political landscape and strengthening civic life.

Granny's Law aligns with our mission because it protects the rights, dignity, and wishes of elders—particularly those who rely on caregivers, family members, and trusted representatives to manage their affairs. The legislation authorizes personal representatives, under specific circumstances, to petition the Orphans' Court to interpret a decedent's will in accordance with the decedent's intent, using certain forms of extrinsic evidence. It also establishes a rebuttable presumption regarding intent and provides mechanisms to ensure that legacies are used as the decedent intended.



These protections are especially important for Black families, who disproportionately experience wealth loss across generations due to unclear estate planning, predatory practices, and systemic inequities. By allowing courts to consider additional evidence of a decedent's intent, Granny's Law helps safeguard intergenerational wealth, reduce family conflict, and ensure that elders' wishes are respected—values deeply aligned with D4's commitment to justice, equity, and community stability.

For these reasons, D4 Women in Action proudly supports Granny's Law and urges the Maryland General Assembly to pass this important legislation. We stand ready to work alongside lawmakers, advocates, and community partners to ensure that Maryland families—especially those historically marginalized—are protected and empowered through fair and transparent estate processes.

Thank you for your leadership and for your commitment to strengthening justice and equity for all Marylanders.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Briggins

Rhonda Briggins, President
D4 Women in Action

Granny's Law HB0375 (Signed).pdf

Uploaded by: Rick Collins

Position: FAV

HB0375 Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wills - Evidence of Intent (Granny's Law) Support FAV

Dawn and Rick Collins

Address: 6011 Clairemont Drive, Owings, MD 20736

Email: luv9iron@gmail.com

Phone: 301-346-3383

Dear JPR Committee,

My husband served a 20-year career in the U.S. Navy and so we are both very familiar with the book entitled: Breaking the Color Barrier: The U.S. Naval Academy's First Black Midshipmen and the Struggle for Racial Equality.

While we were delighted to learn that Ms. Johnson's grandmother was featured in the book. We were not pleased, however, to hear how Ms. Johnson's grandmother's estate was handled nor the completely dehumanizing situation that Ms. Johnson found herself facing head on. Nonetheless, we have seen first-hand Ms. Johnson's steadfast commitment to righteous causes. I myself am a preacher's kid so I know a woman of God when I see one. It is therefore our honor to write this letter of support for Granny's Law, legislation being led by Senator Muse and Delegate Stinnett in honor of Ms. Johnson's grandmother. We ask that your committee restore dignity and honor to Ms. Johnson and her late grandmother and to any other Maryland family that might unfortunately find themselves in a similar predicament.

We ask for and urge your committee's full favorable support for Granny's Law SB0190.

Sincerely,

Dawn and Richard Collins

Dawn & Rick Collins

HB0375 Testimony FAV in Support of Granny.pdf

Uploaded by: Robert Stubblefield

Position: FAV

HB0375 Testimony FAV in Support of Granny's Law

To the House Judiciary Committee

Greetings

My name is Robert Alex Stubblefield and I am a poet, lay minister, activist-organizer with organizations such as the Bethesda African Cemetery Coalition, Montgomery County Chapter of DSA, The Black United Front of Moco, Young People for Progress among others orgs. Additionally, I am a lifelong Maryland resident and I am writing in favor of HB0375, Granny's Law. It is high time that there is legislation in place to protect our caregivers and empower them as they get elderly.

The first reason why I support this bill is because the current system is flawed on purpose. The history of probate court comes from a ugly history of ancient Rome, Medieval England, and Colonial America that only benefitted wealthy men while women, other lower classes and enslaved were treated as mere property. In other words, what they desired for their descendants in the case of caregiving and the disbursement of property was not in their control and that it served to increase the wealth of those already in power. Fast forward to today, we see that decedent's today even if it they state in their will that a loved one is to be in charge of the estate and disbursement of assets, probate court takes that away. That is wrong on a few levels: on one level it totally disrespects the wishes of the dead which is what we as a society claim to hold sacrosanct. The second reason why this is wrong is because it takes away time, money and resources from the family in question as they're trying to grieve and now have to go through a process that is unjust. Third and lastly, it creates trauma for the family.

What Granny's law seeks to do is empower caregivers, the majority which are women, with being able to serve as a personal representative to interpret the decedent's will as to the decedent's intent. This is powerful because it will allow families to focus on handling of a passed one's estate without having the added stress of probate court. Additionally it will right historic wrongs by establishing a new paradigm in which an outdate system no longer has that much power or say in family's affairs when it comes to wills. This is long overdue.

Thank you

Robert Alex Stubblefield

Organizer-BACC, Black United Front

Lay Minister and Theologian

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HB0375_FAV_Sandra Johnson.pdf

Uploaded by: SANDRA JOHNSON

Position: FAV



Support FAV HB0375 Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wills - Evidence of Intent (Granny's Law)

Sandra A. Johnson
PO Box 1 Randallstown, MD 21133
sandrajohn@aol.com 410-764-8529

February 2, 2026

Dear Judiciary Committee Chair, Vice Chair and members,

I am writing this letter in support of HB0375 Granny's Law. My family and I appeared before you last year during the 2025 Maryland General Assembly Legislative Session and again we ask for your committee's favorable report. None of what my daughter has walked through is in my mother-in-law's will and hence should never have happened. I am Jennifer Johnson's mother and I lost my husband, Jennifer's beloved father, to a heart attack several years ago. I have also lost many friends and family members to Alzheimer's, Cancer and Cardiovascular disease. Additionally, I spent a good part of my professional career working in the State of Maryland juvenile justice system so I have seen first-hand some of the mental illness that is affecting the African American Community.

Jennifer was an excellent caregiver for her grandmother. Jennifer and her grandmother were inseparable while she was alive and Jennifer facilitated services for her such as getting her hair and nails done and making sure that she attended entertainment and church services whenever possible, as well as attending to all her medical and everyday living needs.

I am proud of my daughter for taking a stand and trying to honor her grandmother's wishes. However, I was horrified at how the courts handled my daughter and I did everything in my power to quickly get her out of a situation that should have never happened. It goes without saying that my daughter has never been in trouble with the law in her life. As the mother of Jennifer, who was incarcerated per Judge Juliet Fisher's orders in September 2022, (while Jennifer's best friend Kim was dying of cancer) I spent several days searching my daughter's home, trying to piece together information to satisfy the Judge's court

order. I also visited the bank where my mother in-law kept her accounts, to no avail, as the bank would not provide any information due to privacy laws. Jennifer's lawyer asked me to search every source possible to locate any/all financial information available to provide him to satisfy the Court's orders.

In my search for the required information, I probably didn't find everything, but I did follow the court order and tried to find "any and all" information. When I wasn't searching for said information, I was sad and feeling depressed and extremely concerned about my daughter's wellbeing. Jennifer had never been confined in a correctional facility, never been accused of a crime or subject to court hearings and legal orders before. I prayed that the court would have mercy on my daughter and release her from confinement immediately before this experience had any lasting negative impact. I had little or no knowledge about how the Baltimore County Court/Penal Systems . I searched for information when I or close friends could visit Jennifer. I was appalled to find out that I couldn't visit her until she had been confined for more than a week. Telephone calls were only allowed once a day and the length of the calls were limited to 5 minutes. I could only pray that Jennifer would be OK. This ordeal and the way the courts handled my daughter and her grandmother's affairs was beyond disturbing and inflicted unnecessary chaos and upheaval in all of our lives. I ask for your committee's full support for this legislation, HB0375 Granny's Law to help bring justice to our family and to prevent anything like this from ever happening to anyone else in our state.

Sincerely,

Sandra A. Johnson

Late testimony

Uploaded by: Sara Eisenberg

Position: FAV

HB 375 Granny's Law FAV

Sara Eisenberg, MS
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Chairman Bartlett and Distinguished Members of the Judiciary Committee, I submit this testimony in strong support of HB 375 as a founding member of the Board of the Maryland Association of Non-Profit Organizations, a former non-profit Executive Director, a self-employed health professional, and an eighty-year-old white resident of Baltimore City who has been a full-time caretaker since 2020.

HB 375 ensures that Maryland law upholds the intent of individuals who wish to direct their legacy toward addressing racial disparities in health outcomes. A loophole in current law allowed a deeply troubling case—"Granny's" case—to unfold in the Baltimore County Orphans' Court, where the right of a Black family's personal representative to guide the distribution of "Granny's" legacy was disregarded. This is more than a legal oversight; it is a moral transgression.

The impact of such rulings cannot be overstated. According to the Maryland Office of the State Comptroller, the median household wealth for Black families is approximately \$25,000, compared to \$188,000 for white families. Given these stark disparities, the loss of agency in directing even a single Black family's carefully accumulated legacy is not just unfortunate—it is an injustice that compounds historical inequities.

As a former non-profit professional in Maryland, I am well aware of the obligation of non-profit organizations to honor donor conditions. These conditions are not suggestions; they are binding commitments. Until I learned of "Granny's" case, I (mis)understood this compliance to be a matter of law. HB 375 corrects that misconception by closing a pernicious loophole—one that allowed a non-profit beneficiary - and the Orphan's Court - to act in bad faith, disregarding donor intent, personal representative knowledge, ethical responsibility, and a stated Maryland Health Policy priority.

The specific conditions of "Granny's" gift were clear in the family's mind, which the court treated as insufficient grounds: the funds were to be used to address racial health disparities—an issue extensively documented. Since 2020 alone, the National Library of Medicine has cataloged over 16,000 studies on racial health disparities. Since 2004, the Maryland Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities has been required to report on these issues to the General Assembly. The 2025 report notes some progress but acknowledges that significant disparities remain, particularly in areas such as preventable healthcare utilization and HIV/AIDS treatment.

Given this persistent need, the family's desire, and the decedent's commitment, what justification could possibly exist for a Maryland non-profit—or an Orphans' Court judge, for that matter—to ignore both the conditions of "Granny's" gift and the ongoing disparities affecting Black communities?

HB 375 not only prevents future transgressions but also provides a path to rectify past injustices, including those in "Granny's" case. By ensuring that donor intent is honored, particularly when it seeks to address racial inequities, this bill strengthens the integrity of Maryland's legal and non-profit sectors alike.

I appreciate that the Judiciary Committee is also taking oral testimony and is receptive to a fuller and deeper consideration of this proposed legislation, and regret I am unable to participate in that way.

I urge you to pass HB 375 to affirm Maryland's commitment to justice, equity, and the rule of law. Thank you for your time and consideration.

SDJE Written Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Sharon Duncan Jones-Eversley

Position: FAV

Sharon Duncan Jones-Eversley, DrPH, MA
Professor Emeritus -Social Epidemiologist
HB0375 General Assembly Written Testimony
Judiciary Committee
Scheduled February 4, 2026

Hello, I am Dr. Sharon Duncan Jones-Eversley. First, thank you for the opportunity to express my favorable endorsement of HB0375 Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wills - Evidence of Intent (Granny's Law). Granny's Law represent needed elevations of laws that protect the constitutional rights and human rights of the aging populations to make legally binding decisions of their wills and estates (Greene, 2025).

Legislative and judicial branches of government continue to be the gatekeepers to ensure living wills equity and estate protections of our society's most vulnerable citizens, the aging elderly populations (Glenn Tait, 2002; Pollack & Strahilevitz, 2021). Protecting them from judicial rulings that defy the elderly's will-estate autonomy as well as legislative policies (i.e., Medicaid estate recovery) that negate the elderly's' cognitive inheritance decisions for their families and beneficiaries (Diller, 2025; Spishak-Thomas et al., 2026).

I am a lifelong Marylander who was born, raised, and educated in public schools in Baltimore City. My three higher education degrees are from Maryland institutions: Morgan State University and the University of Baltimore.

I am a Professor Emeritus and Social Epidemiologist in the Family Science Department at Towson University. Please note that my testimony today does not represent Towson University. Rather, it reflects my over 40 years in human services and public health.

As a health disparities scholar in the early 2000s, under the leadership of Dr. Carlessia Hussein, I conducted analytical data, researched, and authored four (4) seminal reports for the Maryland Department of Health, Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities. Those reports guided Maryland's First Plan to Eliminate Minority Health Disparities in our great state.

While Granny's Law primarily addresses the interpretation of wills, it has significant implications in Maryland and the nation as we are in the largest era of intergenerational transfer of wealth (an estimated \$124 trillion) from older generations to their intended beneficiaries (Godbout, 2025; Hussain, 2026). Granny's Law provides essential safeguards against wealth-inequality, and it elevate wealth resilience of Maryland's aging population (Koss & Baker, 2018; Mitchell & Roussanov, 2025). The true intentions of all Maryland's elderly residents' estate-will decisions and intentions must be dutifully adhered to and respected and honored for their future generations and beneficiaries. Granny's Law also complements the Maryland Department of Aging's *Longevity Ready Maryland* initiatives to ensure a better quality of life and aging for all Marylanders, regardless of zip code, race, ethnicity, or other social demographics that contribute to variances in health care, health outcomes, and overall quality of life (Maryland's Multisector Plan for Aging, 2025).

However, more importantly, HB0375 aligns with the MD Code that addresses identifying and eliminating health disparities in Maryland. Persistent health disparities exist and remain among marginalized Marylanders ages 60 and older. In Maryland, African Americans are 84% more likely than whites to be diabetic. The revised prevalence of

Sharon Duncan Jones-Eversley, DrPH, MA
Professor Emeritus -Social Epidemiologist
HB0375 General Assembly Written Testimony
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diabetic update marked a 10.5% increase from 2022 (Maryland BRFSS Surveillance Brief, 2022; Maryland BRFSS Surveillance Diabetes in Maryland Brief, 2025). They are also about 25% more likely to die from heart disease or stroke (Maryland BRFSS Surveillance Brief, 2022).

Similar to national data, Maryland Black Americans die sicker and younger than any other race or ethnicity Resulting in higher rates of chronic diseases (heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, etc.), adverse health outcomes, and mortality (LaVeist et al, 1995; Maryland Department of Health, 2024; Penner, 2023). However, when we stratify the data to Black aging Marylanders' low life expectancy (73) and poverty rate (16%), their quality of health and life data are even more disturbing (America's Health Ranking, 2020; Meyerson, 2022; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2026).

While Maryland has made progress in addressing social determinants of health, we must elevate our efforts to target social determinants of death among our aging population, particularly those marginalized and the older Black population 60 and older. Social determinants of death are risk or protective factors, events, characteristics (e.g., individual, familial, cultural, social, generational, environmental, economic, and behavioral) that affect health, life expectancy, and death (Jones-Eversley et al., 2020).

However, health disparities are not the only inequities that Black Americans and their families experience in America and Maryland. Unfortunately, they face judicial inequities in probate court to obtain their inheritance (Kurniawan, 2022; O'Brien, 2024). HB0375 is a much-needed, common-sense, equitable, and necessary update to the State of Maryland's legal obligation and moral responsibility to honor the lives and legacies of Maryland's aging population (McIntosh, 2024). It is unacceptable that any Marylanders' final probate wishes are overlooked, misinterpreted or overridden by excessive judicial discretion (Diller, 2025; Gordon & Spivack, 2025; Fioshin, 2019; Kurniawan, 2022; Garnar, 2024).

Instead, HB0375 injects more structure discretion that tames judicial discretion in inheritance matters that strength family protections, leverages autonomy while elevating wealth equity for families and beneficiaries Brenkel et al., 2018; Herrmann, et al., 2022; Martin et al, 2022). Hence, HB0375 represents a vital opportunity for Maryland to ensure equitable and impartial judicial decision-making for all Marylanders.

I urge the committee to pass House of Delegates Bill 0375 to empower Maryland's families to adhere to the true intentions of their deceased loved ones with dignity and justice (Crawford & Infanti, 2014; O'Brien, 2024).

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sharon Duncan Jones-Eversley, DrPH, MA
Professor Emeritus -Social Epidemiologist
HB0375 General Assembly Written Testimony
Judiciary Committee
Scheduled February 4, 2026

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Professor Emeritus -Social Epidemiologist
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Late testimony

Uploaded by: Sheila Owens-Collins

Position: FAV

SHEILA OWENS-COLLINS, MD, MPH, MBA



Neonatal Perinatal Medicine Consultant
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February 3, 2026

Re: Proposed Granny's Law Legislation – HB0375

Dear Members of the Maryland General Assembly,

I write to you today in strong support of "Granny's Bill," also known as the "I Mean What I Sign" legislation. As a physician, public health expert, and advocate for vulnerable populations, I am deeply committed to protecting the rights, dignity, and legacies of our elders.

My perspective is both professional and deeply personal. My family and I experienced firsthand the devastating power that unchecked probate courts can wield. In Harris County, Texas, despite my mother's will clearly naming me as executor and my son as alternate, the court attempted to disregard my mother's explicit wishes and turn her estate over to the State. When no attorney was willing to take on the challenge of contesting a sitting judge, I represented myself as a pro se litigant. Through persistence and faith, I filed federal legal action and a motion for recusal, and the judge ultimately stepped aside. A new judge rightly honored my mother's will, returning the control of her estate to our family, as she had intended.

This journey, which I chronicle in my book, *Justice Served: How I Represented Myself to Victory*, is not unique to Texas. Across this country, families find themselves fighting for the simple dignity of having their loved ones' last wishes respected. Too often, these battles expose systemic flaws—where courts override valid wills, strip families of agency, and allow financial exploitation through excessive legal fees.

"Granny's Bill" is a necessary and urgent reform, enacting the guardrails needed to ensure Maryland's elders are respected, their voices heard, and their legacies protected. Essential reforms—such as upholding testamentary intent as affirmed in cases like *Goeber v. Goeber*, limiting excessive fees, and involving both family and independent professionals in oversight—would directly address the very injustices I and so many others have endured.

I urge you to pass "Granny's Bill" as an act of dignity and justice for Maryland's elders. By doing so, you ensure that the final act of respect for a life well lived is to honor their last will and testament, including their chosen executors. Let us stand together to protect their legacies and uphold the rights enshrined in our Constitution.

Respectfully,

/s/Sheila Owens-Collins, MD, MPH, MBA, CPHQ

hB0375.pdf

Uploaded by: Tamika Yeadon

Position: FAV

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I respectfully request your committee's full passage of **HB0375, Estates and Trusts – Interpretation of Wills – Evidence of Intent (Granny's Law)**.

I've watched how Jennifer and her family have struggled with their estate in Maryland over the past few years. I personally experienced a difficult and costly estate process in South Carolina while handling my father's affairs. His estate required the involvement of at least three different attorneys before it could be closed. For much of the upfront work, I completed the required documentation and submitted it to the attorney for processing and uploading; however, I was still billed for the hours spent on the case, even though the work itself had already been completed. This included the inventory and appraisal, proposal for distribution, and accounting.

Any additional time required would have been entirely at my expense. During an already emotional period, the process felt unnecessarily complex and costly. Although the will and testament stated that I could sell property if needed, I was advised that I would still need to obtain a judge's approval, which would further extend the process and increase legal costs.

I wish the estate process were more straightforward and flexible for heirs to navigate, providing clarity and peace of mind rather than added stress and financial burden. In cases where litigation may be required, attorneys should be encouraged to pursue more efficient and practical approaches, rather than allowing billable hours to consume a significant portion of the estate itself.

I respectfully urge you to consider the real-life impact these situations have on families and heirs, and to support legislation that better reflects a decedent's intent while reducing unnecessary legal obstacles and expenses. If this house bill is approved, I would like to benchmark to help families in South Carolina who are losing generational properties due to unsustainable systems built into the current system.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tamika Yeadon

hB0375.pdf

Uploaded by: Tamika Yeadon

Position: FAV

HB0375, Estates and Trusts – Interpretation of Wills – Evidence of Intent (Granny’s Law)

Tamika Yeadon
724 Managrass Drive
Joppa, MD 21090
Email: Tyeadon0825@gmail.com

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Sincerely,

Tamika Yeadon

HB0375_FAV_Timothy Dingle EL.pdf

Uploaded by: Timothy Dingle-EI

Position: FAV

HB0375 Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wills - Evidence of Intent (Granny's Law)
Support FAV
Timothy Dingle-El
Address: 1521 Appleton St. Baltimore, MD 21217
Email: Tgdingleel@gmail.com
Phone: 410- 370- 4615

February 2, 2026

Dear Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis and Judiciary Committee Members,

My name is Timothy Dingle-El and I submitted written testimony during the 2025 Maryland General Assembly Legislative Session, and again a few weeks in the Senate for the 2026 Legislative Session under SB0190 and my position has not and will not change. I write to you today in support of HB0375 Granny's Law. I have known Jennifer Johnson almost my entire life; her family and my family have been close since we practically came out of the womb. Our grandmothers knew each other and I know Jennifer's grandmother would be super proud of her pursuing HB0375 (SB0190) Granny's Law and I ask for your committee's favorable support.

I lost my dad and my paternal grandfather both at the age of 57 from stomach cancer. They both lost their cancer battles at the same age and passed peacefully in the same house. I lost my sister to cancer she was diagnosed in childhood and died in her early 20s. My mother survived breast cancer in her 50s has had a double mastectomy and is now living a healthy life. My maternal grandfather died from cardiovascular related illnesses. My maternal great grandfather died of cancer. I am now married and my wife is a pancreatic cancer survivor and while she is now diabetic thank God she is overall in very good health.

My wife and I are intentional about eating healthy and exercising and trying to do our part to break generational disease cycles in our family. I watched Jennifer take excellent care of her Grandmother and as someone I consider my sister, I would trust her with my life and the lives of anyone I love. Jennifer is just that kind of person.

Again, having personally known and loved Jennifer' grandmother and having the love and respect I have for Jennifer, I ask for your committee's favorable support for HB0375 (SB0190) Granny's Law. Those of us who are affected by health disparities know how badly these diseases are destroying the African American community and the toll these illnesses take on our families and caregivers and HB0375 (SB0190) Granny's Law will be one step in the right direction. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely Yours,

Timothy Dingle-El

Granny's Law HB0375- Written Testimony Toye Nelson

Uploaded by: Toye Nelson

Position: FAV

Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wills - Evidence of Intent (Granny's Law)

HB0375

Toye Griffin Nelson

7625 Bear Forest Road Hanover, MD 21076

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(443)956-4202

Support FAV

It is my honor to write this letter and share my testimony in support of HB0375, Granny's Law.

Understanding my background and experiences will help to explain why I am in support. From 2008 to 2009, I endured excruciating pain and repeatedly sought answers and relief from my primary care physician. Despite my concerns, I was given a stress test, which came back normal. As my pain worsened, I pleaded for help, but after months without a diagnosis, my doctor handed me a bag of Cymbalta, advising me to start with 30 mg and increase to 60 mg if needed. In medical notes I later obtained, he labeled me as "psychosomatic," dismissing my pain rather than investigating its cause. I was listened to but not truly heard.

Frustrated and feeling unheard, I stopped seeking medical care for over a month—until my condition became unbearable. In May, I found a new primary care physician, and within a week, I was sent to the Hematology Building at Baltimore Washington Medical Center. Shortly after, I was diagnosed with stage 3B Hodgkin's Lymphoma. So

I believe that Jennifer Johnson's grandmother's estate (funds) were bequeathed to directly impact minority health and health disparities. The people who opposed the legislation last year are those that want to uphold historical systemic wrongs that oppress people.

The healthcare system and probate system are antiquated, sometimes grossly impacting minority communities. The probate system is problematic to say the least and has been hurting people for years, and Granny's law changes that systemic wrong.

Here I am, seventeen years later, I now find myself advocating for my parents as they experience cognitive decline. The people they were when they wrote their will are not the same as they are today—life changes perspectives, preferences, and priorities. For instance, my outlook at 42 shifted when I became pregnant at 43, and now, as a parent to a three-year-old, my perspective continues to evolve. While education and resources are essential for informing citizens about wills, understanding the true intent behind a will is just as crucial. We must respect the wishes of the deceased and uphold the

decisions made by the designated power of attorney. Still, I worry—no matter how carefully a will is written, I could one day find myself in Jennifer’s position. I ask for full favorable support for HB0375 Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wills - Evidence of Intent (Granny's Law).

Sincerely yours,

Toye Nelson

Toye Nelson

HB0375_FAV_Yvette Lankford.pdf

Uploaded by: Yvette Lankford

Position: FAV

HB0375 Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wills - Evidence of Intent (**Granny's Law**)

Support FAV

Yvette Lankford

Address: 301 North Payson Street Apt. 2 Baltimore Maryland 21223

Email: divalankford@gmail.com

Phone: 410 831 4953

February 2, 2026

Dear Judiciary Committee Chair, Vice Chair and Members,

Last year, I testified before your committee, this year during the 2026 Legislative Session you won't hear from me but instead you will hear just what my grandson, Amir Coates, wants to say about this legislation and the current state of affairs in our country.

In January of 2024 my one and only child, Patrice was diagnosed with cancer. On May 22nd 2024 I woke up to the horror of losing my one and only child, my baby girl was only 43 years old and passed in her sleep. Jennifer Johnson and my daughter have been friends since high school, both graduates of one of the only all girl public schools left in our country Western Senior High School in Baltimore city.

Patrice passing away at 43 is not the way things were planned. She leaves behind my precious grandson. We lost Patrice's grandmother at the age of 53 to the same cancer. However, with technological advances, early screening etc. we did not expect to lose Patrice especially not so soon. In fact, what happened to my child is the exact opposite of what any of us had ever hoped or imagined.

I would never ever have imagined that I would have to bury my only child. It is not the natural order of life. I am still grieving and trying to put the pieces of my life back together and trying to create a new normal for my grandchild.

HB0375 "Granny's Law" should be passed into Law and Jennifer's Grandmother, my child and all those caregivers and those suffering with health disparities should be honored and more targeted programming should be provided especially to our youth to hopefully prevent death in future generations in our communities. Jennifer took excellent care of her grandmother in life and continues to in death. Jennifer is one of very few people I trust with my grandson's care.

We ask the Judiciary Committee to unanimously favorably support HB0375 Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wills - Evidence of Intent (**Granny's Law**). Honor Jennifer's grandmother, my daughter and all of our caregivers and loved ones affected by health disparities. God bless Jesus is my Lord.

Sincerely,

Yvette Lankford

HB0375 - Estates and Trusts - Interpretation of Wi

Uploaded by: Laura Thomas

Position: UNF



MSBA Mailing Address
520 West Fayette Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

Canton Office
3700 O'Donnell Street
Baltimore, MD 21224

Annapolis Office
200 Duke of Gloucester Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

To: Maryland House of Delegates – Judiciary Committee

From: MSBA Estate & Trust Law Section

Date: February 4, 2026

Subject: **HB0375** – Estates and Trusts – Interpretation of Wills – Evidence of Intent

Position: **Unfavorable**

The Estate and Trust Law Section of the Maryland State Bar Association (MSBA) **opposes House Bill 0375 – Estates and Trusts – Interpretation of Wills – Evidence of Intent.**

A thorough analysis of HB0375 raises a number of concerns, and shows that the bill would do more damage than good. Firstly, the scope of this bill is so narrow that it is not likely to reduce health disparities in Maryland (the intended purpose of the bill). There likely are other approaches to alleviating health disparities in Maryland that will have a much larger impact than any possible change to probate law.

Secondly, Maryland has a longstanding commitment to testamentary freedom with only minimal restrictions. For instance, under Maryland law a person creating a Will (“testator”) can provide a restricted gift to a charity in their Will. A restricted gift to charity includes a statement that the gift to the charity must be used by the charity to support a specific program or goal that the testator supports. For example, “I give five thousand dollars (\$5,000) to Health Charity, to be used to support cancer treatments.”¹ If such a restricted bequest is made, the recipient charity is required to use the restricted gift for the stated purpose. Therefore, Maryland law already allows testators to direct their charitable donations toward a specific cause or program. HB0375 infringes on the testator’s right of testamentary freedom by granting another person the ability to change the testator’s stated intent in a Will, seemingly without protection for the charitable beneficiaries named in a Will.²

¹ In contrast, an unrestricted gift to charity would use language like “I give five thousand dollars (\$5,000) to Health Charity” thereby allowing the charity to use the bequest for any reason.

² If passed, HB0375 would allow the personal representative to petition change a restricted bequest if the

Marisa A. Trasatti
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Thirdly, under Maryland law (and the law of many other jurisdictions), the admission of extrinsic (outside) evidence to interpret a Will or other contract is limited to situations where there is an ambiguity within the Will or contract. The courts follow the objective theory of contract interpretation, which means that the courts' primary focus is on the four corners of the document to determine the intent of the parties based on the plain, ordinary, and usual meaning of the language in the document. When determining whether to admit extrinsic evidence in the case of a Will, the court first determines whether the language of the Will applies equally to two or more subjects or objects (i.e., the testator leaves a bequest in her Will to "my cousin, Michael", but the testator has two cousins named Michael). If the language of the Will does not apply equally to two or more subjects, extrinsic evidence is not admissible. The court's primary goal is to ascertain and effectuate the testator's expressed intent as written in the Will, and extrinsic evidence is only used to clarify ambiguities, not to alter the express terms or speculate on what the testator might have intended to say.³ HB0375 would open a Pandora's box of speculation about a testator's intent even in the face of otherwise clear language. This could produce extended litigation thereby delaying the settlement of decedents' estates. In addition, this bill would upend a longstanding, commonly understood legal theory that could have drastic ramifications across many areas of the law in Maryland, not just in the context of Wills and estates.

Fourthly, the Will provision included in the statute under (a)(2)(II) has been interpreted in Maryland to grant the personal representative broad authority to manage and settle the estate, ensuring that the testator's intentions are fulfilled, and the estate is managed effectively, but not to change the intention of the testator. Directing the court to defer to the personal representative's actions when a Will contains this clause prevents the court from fulfilling its statutory duty to direct the conduct of the personal representative and places the personal representative's judgment before that of the testator.⁴

Lastly, there are legal inaccuracies contained within the language of HB0375. For instance, the authority given to an agent in a power of attorney document ends upon a principal's death. Therefore, a personal representative, who is appointed after a principal's death, cannot also have power of attorney because the rights granted to the agent have ceased. Second, there is no legal document that states who serves as a person's caregiver. The court would need to hold a hearing to determine whether the individual petitioning the court was the decedent's caregiver.

For the reasons outlined above, the Estate and Trust Law Section of the MSBA opposes HB0375. We believe that HB0375 would impair Maryland's longstanding

personal representative believed that the decedent's life reflected an active interest in health equity issues. Take, for instance, the example restricted bequest used above. The personal representative would be able to petition to redirect those funds from cancer treatments to health disparities, even though it was the testator's intent – perhaps expressed in an agreement with the charity – to support cancer treatments. Both are worthy causes. However, the testator's intent should prevail when interpreting a Will.

³ See *Vito v. Grueff*, 453 Md. 88; *Fersinger v. Martin*, 183 Md. 135; *Schapiro v. Howard*, 113 Md. 360; *Cassilly v. Devenny*, 168 Md. 443

⁴ Md. Estates and Trusts Code Ann. § 2-102.

tradition of testamentary freedom, upend centuries of law regarding document interpretation, and would have little, if any, impact on improving health disparities in Maryland. Accordingly, we urge an **unfavorable** report.

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hb375.pdf

Uploaded by: Will Vormelker

Position: UNF

HON. STACY A. MAYER
CIRCUIT COURT
JUDGE
BALTIMORE COUNTY
CHAIR

HON. RICHARD SANDY
CIRCUIT COURT
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FREDERICK COUNTY
VICE-CHAIR



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MARYLAND JUDICIAL COUNCIL LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM

TO: House Judiciary Committee
FROM: Legislative Committee
Suzanne D. Pelz, Esq., Staff
410-260-1523
RE: House Bill 375
**Estates and Trusts – Interpretation of Wills – Evidence of Intent
(Granny’s Law)**
DATE: January 20, 2026
(2/4)
POSITION: Oppose

The Maryland Judiciary opposes House Bill 375. This bill proposes to allow a personal representative (PR) to petition the court for the court to interpret a will in accordance with the intent of the decedent; if the will has a legacy provision for a health provider or charitable organization and contains no express provision relative to health equity issues.

First, the courts currently possess the authority to interpret a will in accordance with the intention of the testator. Further, it is unclear how the bill would operate where the estate is closed and the personal representative has been discharged, which raises practical and procedural concerns. The bill is also contrary to the principle that testamentary intent is gathered from the four corners of the will itself, not extrinsic evidence. *See Castruccio v. Est. of Castruccio*, 456 Md.1 (2017).

cc. Hon. Sean Stinnett
Judicial Council
Legislative Committee
Kelley O'Connor