



PHILADELPHIA BAR ASSOCIATION

May 21, 2018

Honorable

Dear Representative :

On behalf of the 12,000 members of the Philadelphia Bar Association, I am writing in support of House Bill 111, which provides for merit selection of state appellate court judges.

Last month, I wrote a letter to you describing the Philadelphia Bar Association's long history of support for merit selection, detailing the advantages of merit selection over the current system of electing appellate court judges and asking you to support House Bill 111, without amendments. At that time, amendments were proposed that would have divided the state into many districts with only one nominee being selected from each district. That proposal was too restrictive, in that it would have kept an otherwise qualified individual from being nominated if the only seat in the district was occupied, perhaps for decades.

Subsequently, the House voted in favor of certain amendments that would create three districts in Pennsylvania from which prospective members of the appellate court bench would be nominated. Among the reasons the Philadelphia Bar Association supports merit selection is the opportunity for diversity, including geographic diversity. The recent amendments to House Bill 111 help accomplish this goal without being unnecessarily restrictive.

The proposed legislation strikes the proper balance between selecting judges based on merit rather than political and fundraising acumen, while allowing citizens to select appellate judges by voting in retention elections. The Philadelphia Bar Association urges you to improve the method of selecting appellate court judges by voting in favor of House Bill 111.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully yours,

Mary F. Platt
Chancellor