FAAR
FREDERICKSBURG AREA ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

FAAR ACADEMY

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August 17, 2023

The Honorable Kathy Sterne
Clerk of the Court
Stafford County
P.O. Box 69
Stafford, VA 22555

Dear Ms. Sterne:

As the President of the Fredericksburg Area Association of Realtors® (FAAR), I am writing on behalf of our 1,800 Realtor® and affiliate members to express concerns about the length of time required for an estate to work through the probate process.

The Association has received comments from agents that the process takes more than six months, sometimes even longer, just to get an appointment. During this time, calls and emails to the Probate Division go unanswered, leaving grieving families who are trying to settle estates with no answers and no clear expectations about how long the process will take. The administrative delays experienced by surviving heirs compound the pain of having already lost a loved one. This issue is also unique to Stafford County as we have not heard the same concerns voiced over any neighboring jurisdictions in the region.

There are potentially devastating impacts of Stafford County's inability to provide timely appointments. FAAR has heard from members that outstanding debts are having late fees and penalties assessed and that even foreclosure on a family home is possible. One family that our Realtors® are working with saw a Verizon bill balloon from $500 to $1,500 with late fees and penalties as they wait for the estate to go through probate. Another member has fielded calls from heirs that have been unable to gain control of the mortgage information because the lender or creditor will not talk to them until the will and other probate documents have been recorded. Our members are also concerned about heirs that simply may not have the cash to pay the mortgage payment and need to sell before a foreclosure. If the heirs cannot get a timely probate appointment, the house may be lost to foreclosure and the heirs would lose all of the potential equity in that sale.

FAAR encourages the Court to consider how these long delays are affecting citizens in the County and make every effort to move estates through the probate process as quickly and efficiently as possible. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Carol Sondrini
President

cc: Stafford County Board of Supervisors