



**Testimony for the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental  
Affairs Committee**

**January 28, 2020**

**SB 129 Election Law - Campaign Finance - Protection of Contributor  
Information**

TONI HOLNESS  
PUBLIC POLICY DIRECTOR

**UNFAVORABLE**

AMERICAN CIVIL  
LIBERTIES UNION  
FOUNDATION OF  
MARYLAND

MAIN OFFICE  
& MAILING ADDRESS  
3600 CLIPPER MILL ROAD  
SUITE 350  
BALTIMORE, MD 21211  
T/410-889-8555  
or 240-274-5295  
F/410-366-7838

FIELD OFFICE  
6930 CARROLL AVENUE  
SUITE 610  
TAKOMA PARK, MD 20912  
T/240-274-5295

[WWW.ACLU-MD.ORG](http://WWW.ACLU-MD.ORG)

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS  
JOHN HENDERSON  
PRESIDENT

The ACLU of Maryland urges an unfavorable report on SB 129, which would prohibit the use of campaign finance information for commercial solicitation purposes and prohibit publication of information derived from campaign finance reports in newspapers, magazines, books, or other similar media for the purpose of facilitating commercial solicitation.

The Supreme Court has held, time and again, but most clearly in the case of *The Florida Star v. B.J.F.*, that publication of information that is truthful and has been lawfully obtained can only be punished when the state's interest is of the highest order and even so, the punishment must be narrowly tailored.<sup>1</sup> Although SB 129 does not articulate a penalty for violating its terms, the wholesale prohibition on publication of lawfully obtained information is not narrowly defined and cannot reasonably be construed to meet a compelling state interest. The bill is therefore unconstitutional on its face.

For the foregoing reason, we respectfully urge an unfavorable report on SB 129.

<sup>1</sup> *The Florida Star v. B.J.F.*, 491 U.S. 524 (1989) (“where a newspaper publishes truthful information which it has lawfully obtained, punishment may lawfully be imposed, if at all, only when narrowly tailored to a state interest of the highest order.”)

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