



February 11, 2020

**House Bill 42**

**Public Information Act - Applications for Inspection - Responses and Time Limits**

**House Health and Government Operations Committee**

**Position: Unfavorable**

The Anne Arundel County Office of Law **OPPOSES** House Bill 42 – Public Information Act - Applications for Inspection - Responses and Time Limits. This bill would change the deadline for the initial response to Maryland Public Information Act (MPIA) requests from ten (10) days to five (5) days and production of responsive documents from thirty (30) days to seven (7) days.

Last year, Anne Arundel County received approximately 3,000 MPIA requests through its online portal. This number does not include requests submitted in email or writing to different departments. The nature of requests varies greatly in terms of complexity and the type of information being requested. Requests frequently require a response from multiple departments and often require an attorney to gather and redact certain information as well as determine whether information in responsive documents may concern ongoing or pending litigation.

Anne Arundel County is also currently in the process of equipping its police officers with body-worn cameras (BWCs). MPIA requests for BWC footage will require employees of the police department to view all responsive footage and digitally redact certain information. Shortening the MPIA response timeline will drastically increase the workload these employees bear once the program is implemented.

Finally, shortening the initial response time may actually lead to less accurate responses from governmental agencies as there would be less time to determine where records responsive to each request are located, what records are responsive, and the range of costs for fully responding to requests that need more time.

For these reasons, the Anne Arundel County Office of Law respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** report on House Bill 42.