



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

WILL JAWANDO
COUNCILMEMBER
AT-LARGE

Ways and Means Committee
Testimony in Support of HB 1351
February 27, 2020

Good afternoon, my name is Will Jawando and I am a Councilmember-at Large in Montgomery County. Thank you for allowing me to testify in support of HB 1351, the Public Financing Act.

Montgomery County used public finance for elections for the first time in 2018. As a candidate for County Council, my campaign opted into the program.

Out a crowded primary field of 33 candidates vying for four At-Large seats, all of the winning candidates were elected using the program. I am proud to have participated and I am here today to underscore the importance of the program and call for the expansion of public financing of elections.

Montgomery County's public finance system meant I could run a campaign that was not beholden to a small group of wealthy donors or special interests. To earn the county-funded match, I had to collect low-dollar contributions from county residents -- a lot of county residents. This put me in constant touch with everyday residents, instead of having me on the phone dialing for dollars. And that's the biggest reason I support expansion of public financing is simple: it is good government to have people-powered races.

Donations from Montgomery county residents were matched in a progressive fashion, meaning the lower dollar donations were matched at a higher dollar-for-dollar rate. There was still a match for the full allowable maximum of \$150, but for each \$50 increment the match up was less. Specifically, the first \$50 of the donation was matched x4, the next \$50 was matched x3, and the last \$50 was doubled. This made an incentive to collect lower dollar donations in living rooms, kitchens and backyards across Montgomery County.

This is also about putting grassroots in action. Public financing places regular people at the heart of the campaign, instead of corporate interests. It drew everyday people into the campaign, and with a donation as low as \$5, gave them an opportunity to invest in their own future – because it put everyone on a level playing field, no matter how wealthy or modest their incomes.

Public financing creates a situation where holding small coffees and meet and greets are the focus of fundraising, instead of candidates calling developers and special interests for donations. And that means those special interests no longer have an outsized voice in elections or outsized influence over legislation.

I am happy to be here today to share my experience and fully endorse public financing for elections across Maryland.