



Barbara Noveau, Executive Director, DoTheMostGood—Montgomery County

COMMITTEE: Ways and Means

TESTIMONY ON: HB1351—Public Financing Act—State Senate and House of Delegates Candidates and Matching Fund Revisions

POSITION: Favorable with Amendment

HEARING DATE: February 27, 2020

BILL CONTACT: Delegate Nick Mosby

To: The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser, Chair, Ways and Means Committee, and Committee Members

DoTheMostGood—Montgomery County (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with more than 1600 members who live in a wide range of communities from Bethesda near the DC line north to Germantown and beyond, and from Potomac east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation that improves our election processes. HB1351 is such a bill. This bill would extend partial public financing to campaigns for the State Senate and House of Delegates.

Running for public office can be expensive, particularly if an incumbent is being challenged or there are open seats. In Montgomery County, for example, in highly contested races some of the candidates are raising and spending hundreds of thousands of dollars. This serves as a disincentive to run for those who either are not wealthy or do not have the aptitude or desire to spend considerable time fundraising.

Moreover, in politics all too frequently money from vested interests or large campaign contributors results in legislative action or inaction that is contrary to the broader public interest.

Some of the candidates for Montgomery County Executive or County Council relied on partial public financing in 2018. This constituted a welcome step forward. Under the law, contributions were capped at \$250 per candidate per election cycle. This meant that if an individual made a contribution of \$250 to a candidate before the primary election, he or she could not contribute to that candidate in the general election. This seems unduly restraining and disadvantages candidates in contested primaries who may need to develop a substantially new donor base for the general election. Accordingly, we propose that the bill be amended to provide that an individual can give up to \$250 for the primary election and up to another \$250 for the general election.

For all of the reasons mentioned above, DTMG strongly supports HB1351 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill with the amendment suggested above.

Respectfully submitted,

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