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### Testimony in Support of HB 1351:

#### HB1351 Public Financing Act - State Senate and House of Delegates Candidates and Matching Fund Revisions

TO: Del. Kaiser, Chair, and members of the Ways and Means Committee  
FROM: Larry Stafford, Executive Director  
DATE: February 27, 2020  
POSITION: Support

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 1351. Progressive Maryland is a grassroots, nonprofit organization with 9 regional chapters from Frederick to the Lower Shore and more than 100,000 members and supporters who live in nearly every legislative district in the state. In addition, there are dozens of affiliated community, faith, and labor organizations across the state that stand behind our work. Our mission is to improve the lives of working families in Maryland. Please note our strong support for this bill.

HB 1351 would establish a public funding program for candidates for Maryland's General Assembly. In order to qualify to participate in the program, a candidate must first demonstrate legitimate public support and the seriousness of their efforts to run for office by raising donations from everyday Maryland residents. Once the candidate qualifies, they will be eligible to receive a certain amount of matching funds through the program, with the maximum amount determined by the type of race the candidate is running in.

Publicly financed elections strengthen the voice of everyday voters by turning ordinary residents into major donors to a campaign, which incentivizes candidates to spend more time hearing from them and minimizes the impact of special interests on electoral and legislative outcomes. The program also benefits candidates and future legislators by allowing them the freedom to focus on interacting with their future constituents throughout their campaign feeling without forced to split their time between traditional fundraising and earning votes.

Montgomery County has a program currently in use by candidates for County Council and County Executive, which proved popular in the 2018 election cycle with both incumbents who formerly fundraised in the traditional manner as well as newcomers to the political arena.

Progressive Maryland believes that public funding is a win-win for voters and for candidates. We urge a favorable report on HB 1351.