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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE
FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT
HB 691 - Election Law - Campaign Contributors – Disclosure of Owning or
Controlling Individual or Business Entity**

February 9, 2021

Get Money Out (GMOM) is an all-volunteer organization established eight years ago. We want all citizens to have equal access to the ballot and an equal say in governance. Through our grassroots actions, we have signed up over 9,000 supporters.

Dark money is a growing scourge in U.S. election finance. It has many forms and pathways. The Brennan Center said that dark money may be seven times greater nationally than had been previously reported. House Bill 691 seeks to shine light on contributions in Maryland election so that voters can understand whose economic and financial interests might benefit from the election of a certain candidate or approval/rejection of a particular ballot question.

We are concerned, however, that the bill as drafted may impose a burden on treasurers of smaller campaign finance entities. We suggest that the bill be amended to require any business entity that contributes over \$500 in aggregate to a campaign finance entity within an election cycle to provide the ownership information, including names of individual owners. The treasurer, then, need merely ask for the information and report it to the State Board of Elections.

We ask the committee to consider taking this slightly different approach in order to maximize the information available to the voting public. As written, the bill would provide an advantage to businesses that seek to conceal their ownership. Please amend House Bill 691 so that it more completely achieves its worthy purpose and then issue a favorable report.