



**BILL: HB0691**

**BILL TITLE: Election Law – Campaign Contributors – Disclosure of Owning or Controlling Individual or Business Entity**

**BILL SPONSOR: Delegate Hornberger**

**COMMITTEE: Ways and Means**

**POSITION: FAVORABLE**

**HEARING DATE: February 9, 2021**

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB0691**

Cristi Demnowicz, Chair

Represent Maryland

Chair Kaiser, Vice-Chair Washington, and members of the Ways and Means Committee-

Represent Maryland, an all-volunteer, grassroots, pro-democracy group with members and supporters all across the state, is 100% opposed to dark money. At its core this bill - HB0691 - will shine a light on some of the dark money that is being used to support and influence our elections.

Many states have laws prohibiting corporations from donating to a candidate's campaign. Maryland has a lot of loop-holes that still allow this practice to happen. By requiring a donor to disclose if they are the owner of a non-natural legal entity (i.e. a business,) it will help paint a picture of whose money is being used to do what in politics. Any Marylander can own any number of businesses; whether they are legitimate, or shell companies doesn't matter. From each business, they can donate the state maximum per campaign cycle. And they can donate the max to the candidates committee, to a slate committee, to a leadership committee, to a party committee, and so on. Without a lot of super-sleuthing, the average voter has no way of knowing that \$12,000, \$24,000, \$48,000 or more is actually coming from one person.

Throughout a series of disastrous rulings over ten years ago, the supreme court declared that dark money is legal. Those decisions have done more damage to American politics than almost anything that came before them. Passing this bill is one way in which Maryland lawmakers can ensure that dark money doesn't blindly control our elections in the future. Please find HB0691 favorable.

Sincerely,

Cristi Demnowicz, Chair

Represent Maryland

Maryland Voter-LD07

Represent Maryland is a grassroots anti-corruption group of citizen advocates that #FightForDemocracy in Maryland. Our democracy solutions include: Public Election Funds, Independent Redistricting, Special Elections, Ranked Choice Voting, Increased Ethics and Transparency, and Increased Voter Participation. Learn more about our work at [www.RepresentMaryland.org](http://www.RepresentMaryland.org)

Authorized by Represent Maryland PAC, T Miller, Treasurer