



To: Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Against: HB 1343 Major State Contractors – Donations to Advocacy Organizations --
Disclosure

Date: April 4, 2022

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My name is Elise Saltzberg and I have been a Resource Development Consultant to nonprofit organizations in Maryland since 2000. I am presenting testimony not in favor of HB 1343, which would require nonprofits such as my clients to report donations “made by a major state contractor...to an advocacy organization that makes disbursements for public communications relating to a major state project in which the major state contractor has a financial interest.”

This bill lacks clarity regarding several important provisions, and it may deter nonprofits from conducting advocacy with public communications on policy issues where the outcome might generate procurement contracts – even if it isn’t lobbying on legislation. Several critical terms in the bill, such as *donation* and *disbursement* and *relating to* aren’t defined. Furthermore, it is unclear whether “disbursements” include payments for the nonprofits’ internal costs for generating public communications or if they only relate to payments to external contractors such as public relations firms.

Many nonprofit organizations are “Nervous Nellies” when it comes to any form of lobbying or advocacy – even when it is clearly germane to their missions and in the best interests of their constituencies. Although it is perfectly legal for nonprofits to lobby within certain limits, if HB 1343 becomes law, it is likely to make nonprofit boards, staff, and donors even more nervous and cause their organizations to shy away from advocacy. I urge you to VOTE NO on HB 1343.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.