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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 493 - ELECTIONS –
RANKED–CHOICE VOTING –
CONTESTS FOR PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION IN 2028
March 4, 2024
By Charlie Cooper, President**

Get Money Out–Maryland is an all-volunteer force seeking to get big money out of our political system and make elections fairer. We believe that every citizen should have equal access to the ballot as a voter or as a candidate. District lines should be fair to every voter, regardless of race, ethnicity, or party affiliation. The corruption of big money in politics must be eliminated, and the disproportionate influence of concentrated wealth reduced.

The current winner-take-all system can under certain circumstances fan the flames of division among the electorate. Given the rancor in our national politics, it is critical that we evaluate reforms that might nurture a culture of consensus. We believe that the bitterness we are experiencing is exacerbated by the impact of big money in our elections, which creates huge obstacles to enacting legislation in Congress that benefits the vast majority of working individuals and families.

Adopted in states and communities across the country, ranked choice voting has been chosen for state primary, congressional, and presidential elections in Alaska and Maine. SB 493 offers a chance for Maryland to take a deliberate and systematic approach to evaluating the ranked-choice methodology in the 2028 presidential primary election to evaluate how it changes candidates' appeals to voters. We hope it would give candidates an incentive to avoid negative campaigning. Instead of bashing an opponent, a candidate would be more inclined to court that opponent's supporters in hopes of garnering their second-choice votes.

The current election system often prevents voters from choosing their preferred candidate for fear of "splitting the vote" among those who generally support the same ideology and policies, and thus allowing a candidate they oppose to win the race. Ranked choice voting might also reduce this "spoiler" effect.

By assigning an order to favored candidates, voters would have a greater sense that their votes impact election outcomes. And when a majority of votes cast is needed to win, rather than the current winner-take-all system, they would feel part of a more truly representative system.

We urge the EEE Committee to issue a favorable report for SB 493.