



Testimony of Montgomery County Young Democrats in Support of HB 412-Special Election to Fill a Vacancy in Office-House Ways and Means Committee

February 2nd, 2024

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, members of the Ways and Means Committee,

The Montgomery County Young Democrats (MCYD) strongly support Delegate Linda Foley's bill [HB 412](#)-Special Election to Fill a Vacancy in Office-and urge a favorable report on this bill. MCYD is an organization that offers a voice for young people—those between the ages of 14–35 who live, work, or go to school in Montgomery County—who seek progressive change in order to secure a just and stable future for all of the county's residents. We strive to educate and motivate our peers to become involved in the political process through strong, progressive candidates and policies.

Maryland's current system, in which local political party insiders choose individuals to fill legislative vacancies, has taken too much power away from the voters. Over the past several years, political party central committees—both Democratic and Republican—have quietly wielded so much power that a number of Maryland state legislators have been initially appointed by these committees rather than elected by the voters. The process as it stands empowers central committee insiders with choices that voters should make—choices that voters make in many other states. In fact, Maryland is the only state with four-year State House terms other than North Dakota that relies on this political party insider appointment process.

HB 412 would fix this problem. It proposes a constitutional amendment that would require a special election be held at the same time as the regular statewide primary and general elections, in order to fill legislative vacancies when a Delegate or Senator is no longer in office. These elections would occur if the vacancy occurs 55 or more days

before the deadline for filing candidacies for the regular statewide election. Further, this amendment would have to be approved by Maryland voters before it would take effect.

Since these special primary and general elections would take place during the regular primary and general elections that occur in the second year of legislative terms, turnout would be higher than if they were held at separate times, and additional expenses and requirements would be minimal. HB 412 would help young people between the ages of 18 and 34 increase their faith in our political system. Maryland's current system, which gives power to a handful of political insiders to fill legislative vacancies, does not inspire confidence.

In conclusion, HB 412 would help build confidence in our political institutions and increase democracy. Instead of legislative vacancies being filled by central committees, which are often not transparent and make decisions behind closed doors, voters would fill vacancies. Elections are an essential part of representative democracy.

We urge your support for and a favorable report on HB 412, which will promote accountability and make Maryland's political system more democratic. Please contact us at mocoyoungdems@gmail.com with any questions.

Sincerely,

The Montgomery County Young Democrats