

Oppose HB 806

Health and Government Operations Committee

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and members of the committee,

I strongly oppose HB806, which seeks to amend the Public Information Act in Maryland. While the bill's intention may be to curb frivolous or vexatious requests, I believe that its provisions will ultimately undermine the transparency and accountability that are essential to a healthy democracy.

The Public Information Act is a cornerstone of Maryland's transparency laws, providing citizens with access to government records and information. By making it easier for the government to dismiss or ignore requests the bill would effectively erode this right. We believe that the government should operate transparently to all citizens, not just those who can navigate the complexities of the law.

The bill's provisions would create a chilling effect on public access to information, discouraging citizens from exercising their right to request information. This would be particularly damaging for marginalized communities, who often rely on access to information to hold their government accountable. By making it harder for citizens to access information, HB806 would perpetuate a system of secrecy and exclusivity that is antithetical to democratic values.

The bill's definitions of "frivolous," "vexatious," "abusive," and "in bad faith" are overly broad and subjective. This would give the government too much discretion to dismiss requests without justification, undermining the integrity of the Public Information Act.

In conclusion, I strongly urge you to oppose HB806 in its current form. Instead, I suggest that you work to strengthen the Public Information Act, making it easier for citizens to access information and hold their government accountable. Transparency is a fundamental right that should be protected and promoted, not undermined.

Sincerely,
Mark Meyerovich
Gaithersburg, MD