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**Testimony in Support of HB 333
General Assembly Vacancy - Political Party Central Committees -
Procedures**

HB 333 would enact safeguards for the appointment process to fill a vacancy in the General Assembly. The bill would codify measures to ensure that the appointment process is transparent and inclusive of the public.

The House of Delegates passed this bill in 2024 by a vote of 135 to 1 and in 2025 by a vote of 138-0.

Filling a vacancy in the General Assembly is an important responsibility of the Governor and the local central committee of the same party as the departing member. Maryland's Democratic and Republican Central Committees do the difficult work of vetting applicants for legislative appointments.

Although this bill is not about any particular appointment, public trust in the process has been strained at times because of a lack of transparency, leading to concerns about undue influence and backroom deals. In order to maintain public trust, it is essential that the appointment process be carried out with transparency and integrity.

This bill is especially needed due to the extraordinarily high number of legislative vacancies that occur in our state. In the past 10 years, there have been 69 legislative vacancies in Maryland. Over that same time period, Maryland ranked second in the nation in the number of total vacancies in our legislature.

Given the compelling public interest in fair and transparent appointments, other states that use an appointment process have enacted requirements regarding the timeframe, public notification, public input, and voting requirements of the entity that fills the vacancy.¹

¹ For instance, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, and North Dakota

In the three years since Delegate Griffith and I started working on this bill, both the Maryland Democratic and Republican Parties have revised their by-laws. Both parties made reforms that are in keeping with some provisions of this bill. While good reforms have been made, there are still significant differences between the two parties' rules and even among local central committees within a party. HB 333 would ensure that the appointment process is more uniform across the state, providing a level playing field for all individuals seeking nomination to fill a vacancy in the General Assembly, regardless of their party affiliation or county of residency.

What This Bill Does

- Requires that the application period must be open and advertised for at least 7 days.
- Requires translation of the above announcement only if the county in which the central committee is located is required to translate elections materials under section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act.
 - Currently, only Montgomery and Prince George's Counties are required to translate election materials into Spanish.
- Requires that submitted applications must be publicly posted by the central committee or the state party and remain posted for at least 30 days after the vote is taken.
 - Personal information, such as the applicant's home address, can be redacted.
- Requires that a public forum be held by the central committee to interview the candidates. For example, candidate interviews or a candidate forum.
- Requires that a meeting to fill a vacancy in office shall be accessible to the public and announced at least 3 days in advance.
- Requires that a central committee member who has applied for the vacancy has to recuse themselves from voting and from administering the process (e.g. reviewing applications, interviewing candidates).
- Prohibits voting by secret ballot. The vote has to be a roll call or use signed ballots, and the vote must take place in open session.