

**Carr - FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT testimony on HB328 PG/MC 105-26**

March 7, 2026

Dear Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr and members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on House Bill 328 Bicounty Commissions – Public Ethics – Financial Disclosure Statements PG/MC 105-26.

I wanted to flag for you two problems with bicounty financial disclosures that need to be addressed either with amendments to this bill or in a future bill:

- 1) The inability of members of the public to inspect financial disclosure statements of bicounty commissioners
- 2) The convoluted process by which such disclosures are filed, stored and processes

Many Maryland public officials, including members of the General Assembly, file annual financial disclosure statements with the state ethics commission. Once upon a time, this process was burdensome because it was all done on paper. Members of the public who wanted to inspect a financial disclosure statement had to take off from work, or other duties, drive to the Annapolis office of the ethics commission during business hours, and inspect it in-person.

Fortunately, financial disclosure statements have gone electronic. Disclosures are filed electronically, stored electronically and can be inspected electronically. Less burdensome for all involved.

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But when we passed the law modernizing financial disclosures, there was an inadvertent omission: disclosures of bicounty commissioners, despite being filed and stored electronically at the ethics commission, can still only be inspected in-person, during business hours, at their Annapolis office.

This loophole can easily be fixed.

The second issue is the convoluted process for bicounty financial disclosures per the attached flow chart. A better process would be for the disclosures to be filed electronically with the state ethics commission and for other stakeholders to be given electronic access to the state ethics commission's records. That way the disclosures will be stored electronically, in a single place, no more extraneous paper processes or confusion about which entity possesses the public record or handles public inspection.

Sincerely,

Al Carr

# Financial Disclosure for Montgomery County Planning Board Applicants

