



Peter Franchot  
*Comptroller*

## TESTIMONY OF COMPTROLLER PETER FRANCHOT

### Support - Senate Bill 10 - General Assembly - Special Election to Fill a Vacancy in Office

*Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee  
January 22, 2020*

Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chairwoman Kagan and members of the Committee, I am pleased to provide testimony in **support** of **Senate Bill 10 - General Assembly - Special Election to Fill a Vacancy in Office**. I would like to thank Senator Lam and Senator Hough for sponsoring this bipartisan legislation.

As each of you know, the delegates and senators who comprise the Maryland General Assembly do not work for their local central committees. Nor do they work for the Democratic or Republican parties. They work for the taxpayers who pay their salaries and expenses, and that's who should - and must - have the sole privilege of choosing legislators who make consequential decisions on their behalf.

I am particularly concerned **how** these appointments have been made. Central Committees often quite literally take votes in back rooms, hidden away from the public, with a selection and vetting process that lacks transparency and accountability. Most recently, an aspiring delegate was chosen with a plurality of three total votes to represent a district that is home to over 117,000 Marylanders.

It's time to do away with the secretive, closed-door elections that are often already determined and are decided by a handful of votes. Each and every one of these vacancies must be filled by a special election to restore the fundamental principles of Democracy and inspire trust and confidence among Maryland voters, in a time when so many of our fellow Marylanders have lost faith in their government.

Senate Bill 10 is a step in the right direction. The legislation proposes a constitutional amendment that will change the procedure for filling vacant seats within the General Assembly. Currently, local central committees are tasked with interviewing and recommending nominees to the Governor to fill a legislative vacancy. Senate Bill 10 would limit local central committees' appointment powers to vacancies that occur 21 days prior to a presidential election filing deadline.

For the reasons stated above, I respectfully request a **favorable report** for Senate Bill 10.  
Thank you for your time and consideration.

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