

January 22, 2020

Testimony on SB 10
General Assembly – Special Election to Fill a Vacancy in Office
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports SB 10, which would require a special primary and special election at the same time as regular primaries and elections to fill seats vacated by members of the Maryland State Senate or House of Delegates.

Currently, in the event of a vacancy in the General Assembly, the Governor may appoint their replacement who may then fill that office for the duration of the office's term. While this can be an adequate solution in some situations, in others, it results in legislators filling nearly an entire term without giving their constituents a real say in the process.

SB 313 would change this, requiring that special elections be held to fill these vacated seats. This bill would provide for true democratic participation by giving citizens a greater voice in choosing who represents them when these vacancies occur. This bill would also create greater consistency between the process for replacing a vacancy for a Representative seat and a Senate vacancy.

Additionally, SB 10 would do this by holding special elections that occur at the same time as regular elections, ensuring maximum awareness of and turnout for the elections.

SB 10 is a straightforward bill, returning power to Maryland citizens in the event of a vacancy by one of their popularly elected officials. As such, we urge a favorable report.