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Education, Health, and
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Joint Audit Committee
Joint Committee on Federal Relations



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB363: Maryland State Agency Transparency Act
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Hearing: Thursday, February 13, 2020, at 1:00pm

The world is moving towards greater accountability through live-streaming and an increased Internet presence. In recent years, some government entities have taken steps to strengthen transparency; post more information; and provide live-streaming at selected public entities. This bill would expand greater accessibility to the following agencies:

- Emergency Number Systems Board (ENSB -- the 9-1-1 Trust Fund);
- Maryland Stadium Authority;
- Maryland Technology Development Corporation (TEDCO);
- Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA);
- Public Service Commission (PSC); and
- State Board of Elections (SBE)
 - Conforming SB184 from 2019.

These agencies have significant budgets and an outsized impact on our State's well-being and economy. There is variation in the language of existing laws; SB363 would establish consistency by requiring the specified agencies to:

- Post meeting agendas online at least 48 hours in advance;
- Provide live-streaming of public portions of the meeting; and,
- Share meeting minutes online within two business days of approval.

Technological advancements have facilitated the sharing of live video, making implementation easier for State agencies. In recent years, more and more agencies are becoming more accessible to the public. Examples of other entities that already live stream their meetings:

- Maryland State Department of Education;
- Maryland Board of Public Works; and
- State Board of Elections.

Posting agendas 48 hours in advance would not preclude new business items from being added in an emergency. Agencies would still be able to enter into executive session without having to live-stream confidential business. This legislation would increase transparency and allow the public to access State government, regardless of the meetings' locations.

Amendment: After reviewing SB123 by Senator Feldman, which would require transparency at the MDTA, I will be proposing an amendment to specify that the six agencies maintain the video online for at least five years.

I urge a favorable report on SB363.