

**Clark, Janice**

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**From:** Joanne C. Simpson <writerjcs@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 7, 2020 10:38 AM  
**To:** cheryl.kagan@senate.state.md.us; Clark, Janice; OAG; Kershner, Lisa; Joanne Cavanaugh Simpson  
**Subject:** Please support MPIA via HB 502/SB 590 Bill to Expand PIACB Authority

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 590  
Education, Health and Environmental Affairs, February 13, 2020**

From: Joanne C. Simpson, freelance journalist to various local publications in the Baltimore region, [writerjcs@gmail.com](mailto:writerjcs@gmail.com); 410-821-9592

Dear Senator Cheryl Kagan, Senator Clarence K. Lam and fellow Senators on the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

I am writing to urge you to support the bill HB 502/SB 590 to expand the authority of the PIACB in order to ensure compliance with the Maryland Public Information Act (MPIA). I have found in my work as a freelance journalist for local publications that simple compliance with the MPIA is severely lacking in our state, with resistance to records inspection (Baltimore County Public Schools); months-long delays and obfuscation; and exorbitant and unreasonable costs for record searches and copies. And, in the case of the Baltimore City Police Department, I have seen requests for public records, filled with few problems by other departments elsewhere in the state, go wholly unanswered by BCPD, with no replies whatsoever.

Unfortunately, these public entities know there are few to no actual repercussions for lack of compliance. Thus, the true intent of the MPIA -- to protect citizens' right to know and have access to public records -- is practically null and void for those who refuse such compliance. Please support this bill in committee so that it can move forward. It is essential that a custodian of records "may not fail to respond to a request" under the bill's parameters, and that PIACB jurisdiction is expanded overall, allowing the board to decide PIA disputes not resolved under the current voluntary basis through the state's Ombudsman program.

My very best,

Joanne  
C. Simpson  
410-821-9592