

SB613: Public Financing Act Candidate and Matching Fund Revisions (Maryland Fair Elections Act)

Thursday, February 20th, 2020

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

FAVORABLE

Hello, my name is Rebecca Forte and I am submitting my testimony as a member of Anne Arundel County Indivisible, RepresentMD, and the Fair Elections Coalition.

Thank you to the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee and Senator Paul Pinsky for providing me with the opportunity to share why Public Election Funds are important to me and why I urge you to vote in favor of SB613.

The Fair Campaign Financing Fund is important to me because it elevates my voice as a constituent and small donor. It means that two sessions ago, when I called the governor and told him that I wanted him to support restrictions on pesticides that were killing our pollinators- I knew that he would listen to me as a Marylander. Last session, I called him and asked for him to support a ban on conversion therapy for minors. And he listened. This session I will be calling him to ask for the designation of swastikas and nooses as hate speech, and I expect him to hear me, and to listen once more.

I didn't used to believe that anyone was listening. In news stories candidates for office are ranked as "doing well" in their campaigns if they bring in lots of money, not on whether they listen or not. That money is deemed more relevant than how many in their district support them, and how many varied people in their district believe in them enough to donate. A particularly wealthy candidate could completely self fund his/her campaign, demonstrating support from only him/herself and still be considered to be "doing well."

This is problematic, and disenchanting for young people like me. I will donate if I believe a candidate is working for me. However, sometimes all I can give at a time is \$5. Am I less worth talking to because of this? Am I less worthy than the people who will give the maximum amount at a fundraising event? It feels that way sometimes.

Public Election Funds help to fix this disconnect and force candidates for office to interact and demonstrate support from those who they would be directly representing. The Fair Campaign Financing Fund does this for the state of Maryland. It isn't perfect, but it's a damn good start. This bill looks to fix the flaws in order to have a better functioning fund that supports more candidates in their quest to listen to Marylanders like me.

Thank you for your time. Please give SB613 a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Forte