

SB 947 - Common Cause MD - Favorable

Uploaded by: Antoine, Joanne

Position: FAV

February 20, 2020

Testimony on SB 947
Public Financing Act - State Senate and House of Delegates Candidates
and Matching Fund Revisions
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports SB 947, which would create a small donor matching system for General Assembly candidates so that they can run free from the influence of wealthy donors.

Since the disastrous *Citizens United* decision and its progeny, America's elections have become deluged with outside spending. Wealthy interests have driven up the cost to compete in elections at every level, boxing out candidates who do not have wealthy benefactors but do have support in their communities. Those that can make it through this money gauntlet, must then spend increasingly large percentages of their work days - time that should be spent legislating and hearing the concerns of constituents - on the phone chasing big-money donors.

Maryland is no different. In our 2019 study, we analyzed fundraising by winning legislators and found that fundraising expectations for candidates continue to rise. From the years 2015-2018, Senators, on average, received a contribution total of \$266,000.00. This amount of contributions was a slight decrease from the 2014 election cycle, but it is still a significant amount of money raised for state senate seats on average. Delegates received an average contribution total of \$125,499.00, which is a 64% increase from the 2014 election where the average amount fundraised was \$79,878.00.

Maryland should be concerned about the rise in candidate fundraising totals. When the cost to run for office is high, candidates often need to rely on mega donors or corporate interests to be competitive. SB 947, the Public Financing Act, would help to alleviate many of these problems by amplifying the voices of regular Marylanders and giving candidates they support the ability to compete with others backed by big-money interests.

Candidates opting into the public financing program would first have to show sufficient community interest by raising small donations from Maryland voters, refraining from taking donations from non-individuals and for donations above \$250. Once they meet qualifying thresholds, at least 250 eligible contributions totaling at \$15,000 for State Senators and at least 150 eligible donations totaling \$15,000 for State Delegates, and the State Board of Elections authorizes the distribution of money after verifying that they have qualified, they would then be matched by funds from the Fair Campaign Financing Fund, at a rate of 6-to-1 or 2-to-1, depending on the size of the contribution, with no match provided for the last \$100. Candidates for State Senator would be eligible to receive \$150,000 per election and candidates for State Delegate eligible for \$90,000 per elections, amounts that we believe would ensure candidates are able to run competitive campaigns in any part of the state.

Because SB 947 could significantly raise the voices of regular Marylanders to compete with the big-money spending unleashed by *Citizens United*, we ask the committee for a favorable report.



Summary of Public Financing Act as Drafted

Threshold to Qualify for Small Donor Matching Program		
	Senate	Delegate
Number of Donations	250	150
Amount of Donations	\$15,000	\$7,500
*Must forgo contributions greater than \$250 and only accept contributions from individuals (no money from corporations, unions, PACs, etc.). Multiple contributions from one person cannot exceed \$250.		

Match Ratios		
	Senate	Delegate
First \$50	6 to 1	6 to 1
\$51-\$150	2 to 1	2 to 1
\$250 cap	Accepted, no match	
*Only contributions from Maryland voters are matched. No match provided for last \$100.		

	Senate	Delegate
Match Cap	\$150,000	\$90,000
*Once the cap is reached, candidates can continue to raise donations from individuals of \$250 or less but will not receive any matching funds. The match cap is per election.		

Example Candidate Performance		
	Total Raised if Candidates Reach Program Cap	Donors & Amount to Reach Program Cap
Senate	\$187,500 (\$150,000 match + \$37,500)	Raise \$100 donations from 375 donors
Delegate	\$110,000 (\$90,000 match + \$20,000)	Raise \$80 donations from 250 donors

AVERAGE CONTRIBUTION TOTALS

MARYLAND SENATORS AND DELEGATES, 2015-2018

Maryland

Body of General Assembly	Average Contribution Total Received
Senate	\$266,934.14
House of Delegates	\$125,499.00

Western Maryland

Body of General Assembly	Average Contribution Total Received
Senate	\$53,339.97
House of Delegates	\$56,139.36

Allegany & Garrett Counties (District 1)

Senate	\$59,902.24
House of Delegates	\$61,680.48

Washington County (District 1,2)

Senate	\$40,213.62
House of Delegates	\$73,304.60

Capital Region

Body of General Assembly	Average Contribution Total Received
Senate	\$256,059.09
House of Delegates	\$93,122.82

Frederick County (District 3,4)

Senate	\$271,355.40
House of Delegates	\$52,056.39

Montgomery County (District 14-20,39)

Senate	\$207,046.48
House of Delegates	\$108,138.16

Prince George's County (District 21-27,47)

Senate	\$409,775.38
House of Delegates	\$119,173.91

Central Maryland

Body of General Assembly	Average Contribution Total Received
Senate	\$252,343.21
House of Delegates	\$139,957.99

Anne Arundel County (District 21,30-33)

Senate	\$243,789.80
House of Delegates	\$234,264.36

Baltimore County (District 6-8,10-12,42,44)

Senate	\$290,247.51
House of Delegates	\$135,630.77

Baltimore City (District 40,41,43-46)

Senate	\$247,511.70
House of Delegates	\$189,113.09

Carroll County (District 4,5,9)

Body of General Assembly	Average Contribution Total Received
Senate	\$262,730.21
House of Delegates	\$62,765.66

Harford County (District 7,34,35)

Senate	\$195,138.65
House of Delegates	\$108,149.89

Howard County (District 9,12,13)

Senate	\$274,642.56
House of Delegates	\$109,824.14

Eastern Shore

Body of General Assembly	Average Contribution Total Received
Senate	\$259,786.06
House of Delegates	\$85,469.64

Caroline County (District 36,37)

Senate	\$210,976.39
House of Delegates	\$45,228.33

Cecil County (District 35,36)

Senate	\$149,309.69
House of Delegates	\$44,818.33

Dorchester & Talbot County (District 37)

Senate	\$123,778.40
House of Delegates	\$171,150.38

Kent & Queen Anne's County (District 36)

Body of General Assembly	Average Contribution Total Received
Senate	\$298,174.37
House of Delegates	\$45,228.33

Somerset & Worcester County (District 38)

Senate	\$428,797.50
House of Delegates	\$45,006.00

Wicomico County (District 37,38)

Senate	\$276,287.95
House of Delegates	\$123,884.75

Southern Maryland

Body of General Assembly	Average Contribution Total Received
Senate	\$512,650.62
House of Delegates	\$83,221.20

Calvert County (District 27,29)

Senate	\$451,849.93
House of Delegates	\$99,328.96

Charles County (District 27,28)

Senate	\$945,194.44
House of Delegates	\$48,622.42

St. Mary's County (District 29)

Senate	\$140,907.48
House of Delegates	\$101,712.22

SB 947 - Common Cause MD - Favorable

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Testimony on SB 947
Public Financing Act - State Senate and House of Delegates Candidates
and Matching Fund Revisions
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SB 947 - AA County Indivisible - Favorable

Uploaded by: CHILBERT, BECCA

Position: FAV

SB947 Public Financing Act - State Senate and House of Delegates Candidates and Matching Fund Revisions

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 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 SB947.

The Fair Elections Funds are important to me because they allow for more candidates to run, irregardless of their personal wealth, gender, race, sexuality etc. This past election I helped with the state senate campaign of Eve Hurwitz in District 33. Eve had never run for office before, did not have relationships with big donors, and was not personally wealthy. She was not able to personally finance her campaign and wouldn't have been able to run at all if that had been necessary.

Instead she counted on grassroots support. She had a scrappy but willing team of caregivers, door-knockers, social-media savvy millennials, and postcard-writing volunteers. What we lacked in money we made up for in grit, and in the end she was able to run and win 46.4% of 65,000 votes!

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 have their constituents support. 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 money is not a good indicator of true support.

Metrics like this are 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-\$50. 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. Eve had to amass large amounts of volunteers in order to run. And she did this, utilizing the talents of people like me, instead of only amassing large amounts of money. The Fair Campaign Financing Act looks to support new and diverse candidates like Eve by helping to reward them for spending their time interacting with constituents, rather than only interacting with donors. It would encourage more Eve's to run for office- and that is a good thing.

Thank you for your time. Please give SB947 a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Forte

GMOM_Cooper_FAV_SB0947

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Position: FAV

GET MONEY OUT

Maryland

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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 947
PUBLIC FINANCING ACT – STATE SENATE AND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
CANDIDATE AND MATCHING FUND REVISIONS**

February 20, 2020

Get Money Out (GMOM) is an all-volunteer organization that was established just over seven years ago. We now have more than 8,400 citizen supporters. We work in Maryland toward the goals that all citizens should have equal access to the ballot and an equal say in governance.

The United States has endured several decades of the vicious cycle of big-money campaign financing, high-dollar lobbying, and policies that promote economic inequality. The percentage of wealth and income held by the top 1% has skyrocketed during this era while working families have not shared in the growth of the economy.

According to CNBC: “The top 1% saw their share of wealth rise to 38.6% in 2016 [while] the share of wealth held by the bottom 90% of Americans has been falling steadily for 25 years, hitting 22.8% in 2016 from 33.2% in 1989.”ⁱ Elections cost too much for candidates but nothing compared to the accumulated wealth of the new aristocracy.

The decade since the *Citizens United v. FEC* decision has exacerbated everything bad about the vicious cycle. A billion dollars of dark money has flowed through federal campaigns, and now we are more susceptible than ever to foreign sources of campaign spending. PACS and SuperPACs can spend unlimited sums on false advertising – now multiplied by Internet platforms faster than fact-checkers can keep pace. In the 2018 mid-term federal elections, just ten families were responsible for 7% of all spending.

We are seeing yet another ominous milestone in the convergence of negative impacts of the presidential campaign of Michael Bloomberg.

- Although we are still 8-1/2 month out from the November election, Bloomberg has already broken the record for TV advertising by spending \$338 million.
- He is buying up the pool of GOTV and field operatives by offering previously-unheard-of amounts. Under the headline, “Mike Bloomberg Is Hiring So Many Operatives, Local and State Campaigns Are Starving for Help,” we learn that “The salaries being paid to Bloomberg staffers are well above market rates, and often

come with housing included, as well as a laptop and an iPhone....The Bloomberg campaign is offering field organizers, or FOs) [\\$6,000 per](#) month and guaranteed pay through November....”ⁱⁱ

- A candidate for a Connecticut House seat lost a special election by 79 votes after her campaign manager was hired by Bloomberg less than 3 weeks before election day.

We are not criticizing Mr. Bloomberg as a candidate, but we strongly believe that no one person should be able to wield this much power. The essence of democracy is equality among citizens. The present level of economic inequality – combined with our corrupt campaign finance system, voter suppression campaigns, and the attribution of constitutional rights to artificial entities (such as unions and corporations) – threatens to destroy our system of democratic republicanism.

Senate Bill 947 is a major step forward on leveling the playing field so that talented and civic-minded people of all economic backgrounds have a fair chance to be elected to the Senate or House of Delegates. The bill would help makes small donors – i. e., voters – matter much more. Candidates would have a real incentive to talk to voters and get small donations, which would then be matched by a multiple from the Fair Campaign Financing Fund. The smallest donations would be multiplied the most.

This bill carries a substantial fiscal note, and it would represent a major change in the way we finance our campaigns for the State legislature. But we believe that the threats to democracy that we have seen since the *Citizens United v. FEC* decision will broaden and deepen. Dark money, foreign money, and SuperPACs with massive financial power will come to Maryland. This will become a crisis that must be addressed as a high priority of State government. The cost is approximately 0.2% of the State’s general fund revenues. We urgently request a favorable report.

ⁱ <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/09/27/the-top-1-percent-of-americans-now-control-38-percent-of-the-wealth.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://theintercept.com/2020/02/13/bloomberg-spending-local-state-campaigns/>

SB0613_WISE_FAV_KOUL

Uploaded by: KOUL, MICHELLE

Position: FAV

SB613: Public Financing Act – Candidate and Matching Fund Revisions (Maryland Fair Elections Act)
Thursday, February 20th, 2020
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
FAVORABLE

WISE (Women Indivisible Strong Effective) is a group of over 700 women from AACo (primarily D33) who work to promote inclusivity, fairness, and safety in our communities and keep our local leaders accountable. WISE is in favor of public campaign financing programs at every level of government. Studies have shown that not only does it reduce the influence of big business and PACs on our candidates' decisions, but it increases voter involvement and turnout, encourages candidates to run voter-centered campaigns and increases the number and the diversity of candidates who run. In this testimony I would like to illustrate the need for this type of election fund by discussing some of the spending that took place in the last election cycle. The data described herein was obtained from <https://campaignfinance.maryland.gov/>.

In 2018 WISE monitored campaign donations and spending and tried to expand disclosure about the type and amounts of funding that our local D33 candidates were accepting. The incumbent senator ran unopposed in both 2014 and 2010, and he and other incumbents had funds rolled over from past election cycles that were available for immediate expenditure. For example, Jerry Walker, a sitting Anne Arundel county council member at the time, was able to accumulate almost \$200,000 to enter the D33 delegate race, with another incumbent delegate in second place with almost \$70,000. Four D33 challengers (all women that did not hold any kind of public office at the time), were barely breaking \$5,000 at that same point.

Jerry Walker obtained more than two thirds of his donations from businesses, while incumbent delegates drew between a fifth and a quarter of their donations from businesses. The incumbent senator accepted nearly a third his donations from businesses. In comparison, business contributions were 0% to 2% of the challengers' donations. It is clear that incumbents have a major advantage due to their business contacts. The fact that sitting county and state officials are magnets for business donations is no surprise, as they are often making decisions that affect those businesses.

In the 2018 D33 delegate race where seven candidates were running for three seats, it turned out that the losing challengers were only 0.6 and 1.2% of the total votes behind the least favored successful incumbent. If those challengers were not ultimately outspent by this delegate by *five to one*, one of them could have easily won his seat. (The incumbent senator outspent his challenger seven to one!)

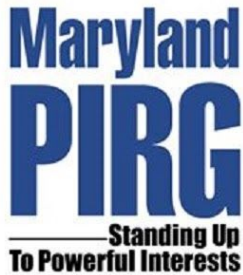
We support SB613 as a way to lessen the influence of corporate money on election outcomes. As the public becomes more educated about what it means to be a small donor candidate, it is our belief that candidates will take part in this program not because it will provide financing levels that will compete with corporate donations, but because voters will be using the small donor nature of the candidate's financials as a litmus test for who they are willing to support. A public donor fund will ultimately create a more diverse field of candidates who are accountable to the individual voter.

Thank you for all you do for Maryland,
Dr. Michelle Koul
WISE (Women Indivisible Strong Effective, AACo), Severna Park

MDPIRG_EmilyScarr_FAV_SB0947

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Position: FAV



Emily Scarr, Maryland PIRG Director
SB947 Public Financing Act - State Senate and House of Delegates
Candidates and Matching Fund Revisions Thursday, February 20th, 2020
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

FAVORABLE

Maryland Public Interest Research Group (Maryland PIRG) is a citizen funded public interest advocacy organization with grassroots members across the state.

In 2013, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Campaign Finance Reform Act of 2013 which made it possible for Maryland counties to build small donor campaign finance programs locally. Since, Montgomery County, Howard County, Prince George's County, and Baltimore City have all established these new campaign finance systems, and Montgomery County has successfully run their first election using the new system. And, Baltimore County and Anne Arundel County have also begun the process of establishing local programs. **Now, it is time to modernize and expand Maryland's public financing system at the state level.**

SB947 is modelled after the success of similar programs in the state and country, with adjustments to meet needs of state races. A Fair Elections program will be better for candidates and elected officials, better for the public, and better for Maryland.

We believe that in Maryland, the amount of money your family makes - your race, your gender - should **not** determine the volume of your voice in our elections. But the rise of corporate and large campaign contributions has forced Maryland elected officials and candidates to be increasingly dependent on these donors, giving them less time to hear from and serve their constituents.

SB947 creates a voluntary program which enables candidates to run for office with small donations from their constituents and remaining competitive with those who accept large and corporate contributions. This serves the dual purpose of reducing corporate and large donor campaign spending and re-engaging the community in the electoral process. And with a Fair Election program in place, we hope to expand opportunities to run for office, so candidates of all backgrounds can run based on the strength of their ideas not access to money.

In September, [Maryland PIRG Foundation released a report](#) which found that Montgomery County's Fair Elections program showed strong results in its first use. The report looks at data from 57 candidates for county office, 35 of whom participated in the program and 24 qualified to receive matching funds.[i]

Key findings:

- Candidates who qualified received nearly twice as many donations from Montgomery County residents than those not participating in the program (850 vs 434).
- Candidates participating in the program received an average contribution of \$86 compared to \$1,145 for non participating candidates.
- Candidates running for county council seats were able to use the small donor system to run competitive races. The average contribution, including matching funds, for candidates participating in

the program was similar to the average contribution for candidates accepting large contributions. (\$306 vs \$292)

These types of programs are popular, effective, and gaining momentum.

BACKGROUND: Recent decisions from the Supreme Court have unleashed a wave of mega donors into the electoral process and we are feeling the effects at the local level. The meteoric rise of election spending since these Supreme Court decisions means candidates and elected officials are often trapped spending an increasing amount of time fundraising from big donors, giving them less time to hear from and serve their constituents. It has also exacerbated the already shrinking faith that citizens have in their elected officials and government.

An October 2017 Poll from the University of Maryland and the Washington Post found that Americans, regardless of political affiliation agree the money in politics is a big issue and are not happy with the way our democracy is going.[ii]

- 36% said they are not proud of the way democracy works in America, up from 18% in 2014.
- Money in politics was listed as the #1 cause for dysfunction in the U.S. political system, with a whopping 96% of participants blaming money in politics for causing dysfunction and 94% of participants blame wealthy political donors for causing dysfunction.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Small donor public financing enables candidates to run a competitive race without relying on large or corporate donors. In addition to local programs across Maryland, similar programs have proved effective in Connecticut and New York City, where more than 90% of candidates frequently participate in the program.[iii]

The fight to overturn Citizens United will be long, but this is something you can do now. There is no doubt that our democracy is in a fragile state, especially down the road in D.C. You have an incredible opportunity to empower Maryland residents in our elections and build a democracy for the people. I hope you take it.

We respectfully request a favorable report.

[i] Fair Elections in Montgomery County: Matching Program Encourages and Empowers Small Donors, Maryland PIRG Foundation, September 2019, <https://marylandpirg.org/reports/mdp/fair-elections-montgomery-county-0>

[ii] Most Americans say politics have reached a dangerous new low point, Washington Post and University of Maryland, October 28, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/page/2010-2019/WashingtonPost/2017/10/28/National-Politics/Polling/release_497.xml

[iii] States, Counties, and Municipalities Empower Small Donors and Curb the Power of Big Money in Politics, Demos, June 28, 2017, <http://www.demos.org/publication/public-funding-electoral-campaigns-how-27-states-counties-and-municipalities-empower-sma>