



Maryland Municipal League

The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns

TESTIMONY

February 20, 2020

Committee: Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs

Bill: SB 974 – Public Ethics – Lobbyists – Gift Exception and Regulation Activities Exemption

Position: Oppose

Reason for Position:

The Maryland Municipal League opposes SB 974 which would specify an exception to the definition of the term “entity” to include a governmental unit that employs an individual regulated lobbyist. The bill also repeals a provision in law that exempts from regulation of lobbying activities an appearance of employees of an association engaged only in representing counties or municipal corporations.

The Maryland Municipal League serves as the voice of its 157 incorporated cities and towns and two special taxing districts before the Maryland General Assembly, the Administration and State agencies. **The League articulates through testimony and fiscal note input the concerns of its member local governments to ensure that the concerns are known and understood as the State makes and implements policy.** The League is a nonpartisan, nonprofit association, the goal of which is to ensure that issues important to local governments and their communities are communicated to our partner federal, state, and county governments.

MML is classified by the Internal Revenue Service as special Section 115, “Instrumentality of Government” organization. The League makes no political donations and makes no endorsements in any election. MML policies and positions on issues are formulated and approved by elected and appointed municipal officials from across the State. In executing this mission, MML represents many of the same constituents that members of the General Assembly represent. Current law recognizes this special role by exempting the League, its staff, leadership and other members from lobbying registration requirements. This same exemption is also provided to national associations such as the National League of Cities, the National Association of Counties and those

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organizations representing the Maryland General Assembly in Washington D. C. such as the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and the Council of State Governments (CSG).

The members of the Maryland Municipal League include all incorporated cities and towns, representing mayors, councilmembers, administrators, clerks, finance officers and other professional staff. Almost all the elected officials have full-time jobs outside the realm of their municipal responsibilities, and the appointed officials work full-time for their cities and towns. The vast majority of our members depend solely on League staff to carry their message to their Senators and Delegates during the 90-day legislative session. During the interim, all our staff members perform other association duties which include educating our members and their citizens about municipal government and training our members to carry out their responsibilities as elected and appointed officials in their cities and towns. MML also serves as a major resource on municipal issues for members of the General Assembly both during session, and during the interim. The League is called upon many times throughout the year to research questions and assist legislators as they interact with their municipal officials back home.

As introduced, SB 974 would create an unwarranted and ill-conceived requirement that all employees of the Maryland Municipal League register and be treated as regulated lobbyists. MML understands that the sponsor intends to offer an amendment to remove this requirement. If the Committee is inclined to accept such an amendment, MML would withdraw its opposition to the bill. Without the expected amendment, the League would respectfully request that this committee provide SB 974 with an unfavorable report

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