

February 12, 2020

Testimony on HB 315
Public Ethics - Executive Branch - Lobbying by Former Secretaries of Principal Departments
(Shut the Revolving Door Act of 2020)
Environment and Transportation

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports HB 315 which requires a former secretary of a principal department of the Executive Branch to adhere to a one year waiting period before assisting or representing another party for compensation.

This legislation will tackle another facet of the “Revolving Door” issue in Maryland politics, in which, former government employee’s experience is leveraged into unparalleled access when they leave their position and take employment with a lobbying firm. Legislators, state-wide officials, and high-level executive staff have an unrivaled opportunity to develop relationships, networks, and an understanding of the legislative process far beyond the opportunities of an average citizen. It is critical to have a firewall in place that protects the legislature from the impression of unethical behavior and creates a more level field between citizens and special interest lobbyists.

This legislation expands the wait period to include employees in the Executive Branch who were vital to decision making during the tenure of their position.

It is worth noting that other states that have a similar waiting period:

- States that have a wait period for some subsection of executive staff include: Georgia, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Montana, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia; West Virginia also has a wait period for legislative staff.

An ethical and transparent government is critical to ensure that special interests do not hold special influence, and for building voter trust and confidence in the political process. HB 315 is a critical piece of the solution, and we urge a favorable report.