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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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**FAVORABLE SUPPORT of HB 397/SB 803:
Public Ethics - Legislative Unit – Definition**

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

I urge you to vote a favorable report on HB 397: Public Ethics – Legislative Unit - Definition. HB 397 seeks to expand the antiquated definition of a “legislative unit” to include officially recognized caucuses as it applies to the Maryland Public Ethics Law.

What the Bill Does

The bill proposes to extend the Legislative Unit definition to an existing provision which authorizes the acceptance of food and beverages at meals and receptions to which an entire legislative unit has been invited.

By current law, a “Legislative Unit” is defined as the entire General Assembly, either house of the General Assembly, a standing committee, a county or regional delegation of members that is recognized by a presiding officer. There are currently 7 House Standing Committees, 6 Senate Standing Committees, and 12 recognized Delegations.

The inclusion of caucuses in the definition of a Legislative Unit expands the meal and receptions provision to the following:

- Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland
- Women Legislators of Maryland
- Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus
- Asian American and Pacific Islander Caucus of Maryland

Why Support the Bill

As minorities continue to grow in the legislature, the membership of its caucuses has directly seen a substantial increase. Minorities and women currently make up 35% and 40% of the General Assembly’s legislative body respectively. With the passage of HB 397, caucuses will

have additional platform to discuss issues and push agenda that impact minorities and its underserved communities in the state of Maryland. As such, altering the Legislative Unit definition best suits the present demographic of the General Assembly.

I strongly urge you to support HB 397/SB 803: Public Ethics - Legislative Unit – Definition

Sincerely,

Darryl Barnes

Darryl Barnes
Chairman, Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland, Inc.