



**Testimony for the House Health and Government Operations
Committee
February 11, 2020**

**HB 42 – Public Information Act – Applications for Inspections –
Responses and Time Limits**

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The ACLU of Maryland supports HB 42, which would shorten the response times under the Public Information Act (“PIA”) for custodians to (1) decide whether to grant or deny an application for a public record, and (2) either produce the public record or explain in writing why the request was denied.

The ACLU of Maryland believes strongly in open and transparent government, and the PIA is a necessary tool for Marylanders to provide checks and balances on elected officials and government agencies. Filing PIA requests and obtaining information is a meaningful step toward keeping our government accountable.

Unfortunately, Maryland currently has one of the longest response times of any state for public information requests.

The underlying principle of the PIA is that it “shall be construed in favor of allowing inspection of a public record, with the least cost and least delay.”¹

HB 42 would better align our state with the spirit of the PIA, and the majority of other states across the country. It would provide more accountability for state agencies and help ensure that Marylanders are fully able to access their rights to public information and to petition their government.

For the foregoing reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB 42.

¹ GP § 4-103(b).