



**Testimony for the Health and Government Operations Committee  
February 18, 2020**

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**HB 421 – State Government – Open Meetings – Requirements and  
Application of Open Meetings Act  
(Maryland State Agency Transparency Act)**

**FAVORABLE**

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The ACLU of Maryland supports HB 421, which would require certain state agencies to (1) livestream open meetings, (2) make meeting agendas publicly available 48 hours in advance, and (3) make meeting minutes publicly available not more than two business days after they are approved.

The agencies included in this bill are:

- Maryland Technology Development Corporation,
- Maryland Stadium Authority,
- State Board of Elections,
- Emergency Number Systems Board in the Department of Public Correctional Services,
- Public Service Commission, and
- Maryland Transportation Authority.

Under Maryland's Open Meetings Act:

- a) It is essential to the maintenance of a democratic society that, except in special and appropriate circumstances:
  1. public business be performed in an open and public manner; and
  2. citizens be allowed to observe:
    - i. the performance of public officials; and
    - ii. the deliberations and decisions that the making of public policy involves.<sup>1</sup>

The public has great interest in the business conducted by these agencies. However, it is often inconvenient and burdensome for members of the public to regularly attend agency meetings, because of timing, mobility challenges, lack of transportation, and other barriers. The public has the right to stay apprised of state government activities, including observing discussions and the decision-making process.

<sup>1</sup> Md. Code Ann., State Gov't § 10-501 (West).

Transparency is a valuable tool for ensuring civic participation and government accountability. Other state government bodies, including the Maryland General Assembly, already live stream their hearings and meetings, and make information publicly accessible. All state agencies should be held to the same standards of openness and transparency.

HB 421 is an important step toward making Maryland State Government more accessible to residents across the state, increasing trust in fair governance.

For the foregoing reasons, we urge a favorable review on HB 421.



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