



**Testimony for the House Health and Government Operations
Committee**

February 11, 2020

**HB 717 Public Information Act - Required Denials - Distribution
Lists**

FAVORABLE

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The ACLU of Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 717, which defines a “distribution list” under the Maryland Public Information Act (MPIA) to be a list of persons who have opted into receiving notifications and requires state agencies to deny only specific information (physical address, an email address, or individuals’ telephone numbers) in a distribution list.

HB 717 allows for greater transparency in two ways. First, the bill requires custodians to redact un-disclosable information from a distribution list instead of denying the list wholesale. This provision already exists in other provisions of the MPIA and ought to apply here. The effect of the proposed language would be to allow Marylanders to have transparency over distribution lists, without the threat of disclosure of personal information, such as home addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers.

Also, by defining a “distribution list” to be only a list of people who have affirmatively opted in to receiving information, the bill would allow for persons who have not willfully joined an email or mailing list to learn more about the distribution lists they have been added to.

With the increased influx of information Marylanders receive through mass emails and regular mail, the need for greater transparency and oversight will only become more apparent. HB 717 is a simple preventive measure to ensure that our Communities are not improperly receiving communications from state and local government agencies.

For the foregoing reasons, the ACLU of Maryland respectfully urges a favorable report on HB 717.