

February 24, 2020

**Testimony on HB 366
General Assembly - Term Limits
Rules and Executive Nominations****Position: Unfavorable**

Common Cause Maryland opposes HB 366, which would create term limits for members of the House of Delegates and the State Senate, removing the choice of Marylanders to freely select their elected officials.

Term limits have little to no effect on accountability. As James Madison put it in Federalist No. 53, “No man will subject himself to the ridicule of pretending that any natural connection subsists between the sun or the seasons, and the period within which human virtue can bear the temptations of power.” Indeed, term limits arguably provide more incentive to act unethically than the status quo: term-limited legislators have little reason to give heed to the preferences of their constituencies, since those voters won’t be able to re-elect the legislator. That legislator will, however, have incentives to appease future employers, which *could* be constituents if the legislator moves to a higher office, but the it is more likely the legislator will move on to lobbying, or working closely with an industry that they perhaps oversaw.

Term limits also weaken the power of elected legislators as compared to the Executive branch, lobbyists, and agencies, making the legislature *less* accountable. As new legislators get swept in every other cycle, lobbyists and bureaucrats retain institutional knowledge are more heavily leaned on. At a time where legislative offices already must rely heavily on the expertise of these unelected groups, pushing to make them more integral in our governance is the wrong way forward.

To truly create a more accountable government, we must give more power to the governed, not less. Government truly accountable to the people can only exist when elected officials must rely on their communities to support their campaigns, instead of relying on the funding of wealthy interests.

Because HB 366 will reduce the ability of Marylanders to elect their preferred representatives and will have no discernable effect on the accountability of those officials, Common Cause Maryland requests the committee give this bill an unfavorable report.