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BILL NO.: **HB 401**

TITLE: Public Information Act - Remote Access, Fee Complaints, Fee Waivers, and Inspection of Judicial Records (Open Government, Better Government Act)

SPONSOR: Delegate Barron

COMMITTEE: Judiciary

POSITION: **OPPOSE**

DATE: February 12, 2020

Baltimore County **OPPOSES** House Bill 401 – Public Information Act - Remote Access, Fee Complaints, Fee Waivers, and Inspection of Judicial Records (Open Government, Better Government Act). This legislation requires public information requests be remotely accessible, waives fees for certain persons who wish to access public information, and adds certain judicial branch records to the category of “public records.”

County Executive Olszewski has been a champion of government transparency and accountability, and supports efforts to keep the public informed and engaged. The language in this bill, however, is far too broad to properly implement. As it stands, any individual with a blog could be considered “media” and have public record fees waived, which would place a significant financial burden on the County. Adopting a policy to use the internet and other technology to expand remote access would be equally burdensome, and the County takes issue with the bill’s broad policy directives that can’t be translated into operational functions.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests an **UNFAVORABLE** report on HB 401. For more information, please contact Chuck Conner, Chief Legislative Officer, at 443-900-6582.