



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HB 437 Campaign Finance Reports – Business Contributors – Registration Status

POSITION: Support

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Date: February 6, 2020

The League of Women believes the public has a right to know who is using money to influence elections. When campaign reports are filed with the Board of Elections, it is not easy to know which companies making political donations are actual businesses and which may be sham companies being used by contributors who want to give donations in excess of allowed amounts, so they give in the name of a business. This legislation will help campaign entities to know if they could be victims of someone who is trying to avoid campaign spending limits.

HB 437 would require the State Department of Assessments and Taxation to electronically transmit a list of all businesses that are registered with the Department and all businesses that forfeited their registrations to the State Board of Elections who would transmit that information to all active campaign entities.

When the campaign entity files their campaign finance report, they would need to identify any contribution that was made by a business that is registered and by those that have forfeited their registration or are not registered. This is different than similar legislation that was submitted last year that required the SBE to compare the list of businesses in their complete database with the list provided by the State Department of Assessments and Taxation. In other words, this puts the responsibility for checking whether a business is a registered Maryland business on the candidate who is accepting the donation and not on SBE.

We urge a favorable report on HB 437.