

February 11, 2020**Testimony on HB 538 –
Campaign Finance-Revisions
Ways and Means****Position: Favorable**

Common Cause Maryland supports HB 538 which would require that a campaign finance entity that becomes liable for a civil penalty for specified violations relating to the entity's finances submit bank statements if the campaign finance entity becomes liable for a civil penalty as well as provide candidates with greater oversight over spending .

Campaign finance reports must be transparent so that voters can make educated decisions about what the candidates stand for and what they represent. This legislature has made significant efforts to ensure transparency and clear boundaries in our campaign finance system. Our current Maryland campaign finance laws require political committees to report date and amount of contributions, name and address of contributors, transaction methods, source of contributions as well as expenditures, reimbursement and a number of other financial activities which have helped to build transparency and accountability in our election process.

HB 538 would build on those advances by expanding the reporting requirement to campaign finance entities that have accrued a civil penalty. This would include bank statements documenting all expenditures made by or on behalf of the campaign finance entity during the reporting period. Horse-race reporting can lead to skewed campaign finance reports, which give perceived of real advantages to candidates. Bank statements would help reduce this by creating more accurate campaign reporting in cases where campaign finance entities become liable for civil penalties.

HB 538 would increase transparency in cases where campaign finance entities are in violation of campaign finance law and we respectfully request a favorable report.