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**Testimony in Support of HB 1125:
Public Financing Act – Candidate and Matching Fund Revisions (Maryland Fair Elections Act)**

TO: Del. Kaiser, Chair, and members of the Ways and Means Committee
FROM: Larry Stafford, Executive Director
DATE: February 27, 2020
POSITION: Support

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 1125. Progressive Maryland is a grassroots, nonprofit organization with 9 regional chapters from Frederick to the Lower Shore and more than 100,000 members and supporters who live in nearly every legislative district in the state. In addition, there are dozens of affiliated community, faith, and labor organizations across the state that stand behind our work. Our mission is to improve the lives of working families in Maryland. Please note our strong support for this bill.

HB 1125 would strengthen our state's public financing program for gubernatorial elections by stabilizing its funding and modernizing it to look more like subsequently established county-level programs. It would also expand public financing to include Attorney General and Comptroller races.

Publicly financed elections strengthen the voice of everyday voters by turning ordinary residents into major donors to a campaign, which incentivizes candidates to spend more time hearing from them and minimizes the impact of special interests on electoral and legislative outcomes. The program also benefits candidates and future legislators by allowing them the freedom to focus on interacting with their future constituents throughout their campaign feeling without forced to split their time between traditional fundraising and earning votes.

Montgomery County has a program currently in use by candidates for County Council and County Executive, which proved popular in the 2018 election cycle with both incumbents who formerly fundraised in the traditional manner as well as newcomers to the political arena. Since the Montgomery County program has been so successful, we believe that updating the gubernatorial program to include a similar tiered-match system will make the program more attractive to both candidates and grassroots donors.

Progressive Maryland believes that public funding is a win-win for voters and for candidates. We urge a favorable report on HB 1125.