

HB1351 Public Financing Act - State Senate and House of Delegates Candidates and Matching Fund Revisions
Thursday, February 27th, 2020
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
FAVORABLE

Hello, my name is Rebecca Forte and I am submitting my testimony as a member of Anne Arundel County Indivisible, RepresentMD, and the Fair Elections Coalition.

Thank you to the Ways and Means Committee and Delegate Mosby for providing me with the opportunity to share why Public Election Funds are important to me and why I urge you to vote in favor of HB1351.

The Fair Elections Funds are important to me because they allow for more candidates to run, irregardless of their personal wealth, gender, race, sexuality etc. This past election I helped with the state senate campaign of Eve Hurwitz in District 33. Eve had never run for office before, did not have relationships with big donors, and was not personally wealthy. She was not able to personally finance her campaign and wouldn't have been able to run at all if that had been necessary.

Instead she counted on grassroots support. She had a scrappy but willing team of caregivers, door-knockers, social-media savvy millennials, and postcard-writing volunteers. What we lacked in money we made up for in grit, and in the end she was able to run and win 46.4% of 65,000 votes!

In news stories, candidates for office are ranked as "doing well" in their campaigns if they bring in lots of money, not on whether they have their constituents support. A particularly wealthy candidate could completely self fund his/her campaign, demonstrating support from only him/herself and still be considered to be "doing well." This money is not a good indicator of true support.

Metrics like this are problematic, and disenchanting for young people like me. I will donate if I believe a candidate is working for me. However, sometimes all I can give at a time is \$5-\$50. Am I less worth talking to because of this? Am I less worthy than the people who will give the maximum amount at a fundraising event? It feels that way sometimes.

Public Election Funds help to fix this disconnect and force candidates for office to interact and demonstrate support from those who they would be directly representing. Eve had to amass large amounts of volunteers in order to run. And she did this, utilizing the talents of people like me, instead of only amassing large amounts of money. The Fair Campaign Financing Act looks to support new and diverse candidates like Eve by helping to reward them for spending their time interacting with constituents, rather than only interacting with donors. It would encourage more Eve's to run for office- and that is a good thing.

Thank you for your time. Please give HB1351 a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Forte