

February 4, 2021

Testimony on SB 296
Election Law - Campaign Finance - Protection of Contributor Information
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports SB 296 which would protect Maryland contributor information made available on campaign finance reports or statements from commercial solicitation and published in print materials intended for commercial solicitations.

Access and transparency is particularly necessary for our State Board of Elections (SBE), who oversee the process most fundamental to our democracy: elections. Currently, campaign finance reports filed with SBE are maintained in an electronic storage format widely and easily accessible to the public. This transparency ensures voters know who and what entities are funding candidates. It also ensures contributors are able to verify that their donations are reported.

As we continue to advance reforms like public financing of elections throughout the state which will increase the contributions being made by individuals, taking steps to ensure their information is protected will help in efforts to encourage greater participation. If Marylanders do not have faith that their information will be properly secured, that interaction will slow – robbing citizens of valuable services and opportunities and robbing the government of legitimacy.

Marylanders must be able to trust that the State Board of Elections will be a dependable custodian of their contributor information. Because SB 296 helps to protect that trust while continuing to advance the values of transparency in our election, we recommend a favorable report.